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IN THE MARGINS OF CHAOS

Recollections of Relief Work in and between Three Wars

BY

FRANCESCA M. WILSON

With a Foreword by

J. L. HAMMOND

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TO

BACHTIN

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FOREWORD

The literary charm of Miss Wilson's book will attract many readers, and hold their attention from the first chapter to the last. The charm is not merely the charm produced by skill; the charm that an artist can give to his pages by his taste and versatility, his eye for colour and incident, his understanding of character and atmosphere, and the impression his style gives of ease and mastery. Her book is certainly one of those in which composition seems to achieve its effects by instinct rather than by effort. But its special vitality is due to something more than these qualities. It is due to a quality that gives it a political importance.

Englishmen have been apt to strike foreigners as insular, unable to enter into the common interests and tastes of the Continent, spiritually aloof even when they show sympathy by their actions. This view comes out in Turgenev's descriptions, and it is put very directly by Tocqueville in a conversation with Nassau Senior at the time of the Indian Mutiny. The Great War drew us much more closely into the life of Europe, and the benevolent interest in the misfortunes of other countries that had been shown at the time of the Franco-German War now assumed a great scale. Miss Wilson's experiences recall the several fields on which this benevolence has been displayed by British organisations during the last twenty-five years. No other people, except the U.S.A., can match these efforts. What will strike the reader in Miss Wilson's pages is the spirit that inspires her own share in these achievements; it is a spirit as far removed as possible from the spirit criticised by Turgenev and Tocqueville.

Miss Wilson has the taste for noble adventure that made Nevinson and Garratt dissatisfied with any other kind of life, and sent them abroad whenever liberty was in distress. Like many spirited and capable people, she enjoys finding herself in situations that demand in a high degree resourcefulness, presence of mind and the power of quick and effective decision. She is drawn to such enterprises not so much by a sense of duty inspired by this or that view of life, as by a universal interest in human character. There is no trace of patronage or condescension in her attitude to the victims of war or famine because she does not think of them as raw material for the organising skill of philanthropists but as men and women into whose lives and interests she likes to enter. Her relation to them is that of human friendship; she is a friend in the Ciceronian phrase, "one who shares your troubles." It is this that makes her book so interesting to the general reader, and so valuable to the politician. The success of our efforts to help Europe to recover after the war will

largely depend on our success in finding British men and women who can put themselves in that relationship to the victims of the war.

Miss Wilson's account of Spain has a special interest in this connection. The Spanish Civil War was the most terrible manifestation of the special evil of those days when Europe was drifting fast to ruin. The implacable spirit that had overcome Europe in the Thirty Years' War had returned, and Spain was its worst victim. The great French writer Bernanos, who had seen the atrocities at Majorca, foresaw a grim destiny for the world. "The tragedy of the world," he said, "is a foretaste of the tragedy of the Universe. It is the shattering proof of the unhappy condition of men of good will in modern society which, gradually eliminates them, as a bye-product that can be turned to no good account. A man of good will has no longer any party; I am wondering if he will soon have any country." Miss Wilson shows that even in this cruel world, over which the shadow of final disaster was stealing, men, women and children, given co-operative tasks and duties, could live happy and useful lives. Her description of the schools, hospitals and camps that were improvised behind the lines shows what might be made of the Spanish peasants if the reforms demanded by Mr. Brenan in "The Spanish Labyrinth" were carried out, and the peasants were allowed to make co-operative communities on the land now owned in vast estates. I contrast with her picture the spectacle I saw a few months before the outbreak of the Civil War in an Andalusian town, of starving labourers who worked for a pittance on the land to keep great landlords in luxury on the Riviera. I shall never forget the bitter misery that darkened their faces.

Nobody can say whether the war will have taught a new tolerance as the exhaustion that followed the Thirty Years' War taught a new tolerance to seventeenth-century Europe. But whether those special passions abate or swell, Europe will be a world full of bitterness and hatred. There will be memories of suffering and famine; memories of dead children and lost hopes; above all, enough memories of treachery on one side and heroism on the other to create a dozen Spains. This Europe will be full, too, of British men and women bringing material help and comfort. They will find that Europe thinking much more of her wrongs than of her debts to us; of all that she has suffered, rather than of the Britain who lived three years ago her greatest day of solitary splendour, "the last to dare to struggle with the foe."

The spirit in which those men and women carry out their tasks of rescue and reparation will be all important. They will be the peace makers. Miss Wilson's book will be of the greatest value in guiding those workers and the authorities that direct and organise their efforts.

J. L. Hammond

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INTRODUCTION

Early last year, when visiting my home, I found in the top nursery a box full of my letters and diaries, carefully preserved by my sisters. As I re-read them, the past came vividly before my eyes. Most of them were written during the last war and the chaotic years of peace that followed it. They told of the relief work in which I had been engaged in many different countries—in Holland, France, Corsica, North Africa, Serbia, Austria and Russia. I was struck by the contrasts with the present day, but still more by the resemblances. The conditions we shall find in Europe when this war is over will be similar to those described in many chapters of this book. Hordes of disabled men, displaced populations struggling to get home, prisoners dying of typhus and starvation, hunger diseases in cities, famine and epidemic in country areas—all these situations will have to be faced again, on a much vaster scale, at the outbreak of peace, as they were last time.

I have described work amongst Serbs in greater detail than the work with other peoples for several reasons. I spent longer with them. Little has been published about the relief and reconstruction done amongst them, though it was on a large scale and there are many lessons to be learnt from it. Moreover, it is important to understand a people playing such a tragic and heroic part in this war, and who will need great help when it is over; for the Serbs and their brothers the Croats and Slovenes, have suffered through the centuries, but never so terribly as now.

The last three chapters of the book are about more modern times, in date though hardly in situation. They tell of relief work for refugees in Spain during the Civil War, and in the internment camps of France after it was over, and for the Polish refugees in Hungary and Rumania in 1939 and 1940. About the escape of Czechs fleeing from the Gestapo and pursued by the Hungarian police on their way through to France, I cannot write fully for obvious reasons, though I was, against my will, drawn into the Budapest underground movement which helped them, and my experiences in this connection were very curious.

In the Appendix I draw some lessons from the past and make some practical suggestions for the post-war reconstruction in which so many millions are interested at the present moment. Indeed my excuse for writing this book when paper is so short, is that something may be learnt from the relief work of the past, by its mistakes, which I do not attempt to conceal, as well as by its achievements. But the pleasure of writing it to me has been not so much the recollection of the work in which I was engaged, as of the social background of the peoples with whom my lot was cast, and particularly of the personalities of some of the strange characters whom I met and my talks with them.

I have consulted many people with whom I worked in former times. My warmest thanks are due to them for the help they have given me in the reconstruction of the past.

I am indebted to the *Manchester Guardian*, *Birmingham Post*, *Times Educational Supplement* and *Nation* for articles of mine contributed to them. I have excerpted or adapted some passages from these. I have also consulted the notes I made for a little book about Serbia which was published privately in 1920.

In conclusion I must emphasise that this is not a book about relief work in general, but only about my own experiences of it. No one but myself is responsible for it. It is a quiet, unheroic story. I was never, as were some of my colleagues, in the forefront of battle : I was always in the margins of war and of chaos.

January 1944

CHAPTER 1

WITH BELGIANS IN ENGLAND AND HOLLAND

On August 2nd, 1914, Germany delivered an ultimatum to Belgium demanding free passage for her troops to France. Belgium refused, and on August 4th Germany invaded her. On August 7th the Germans took the city of Liège but did not capture its last forts until August 17th. The Belgian Government removed to Antwerp and the Germans took Brussels on August 20th and Namur on the 25th. The retreat from Mons of the British Expeditionary Force began the same day. The German troops pressed on into France and did not attempt to occupy the whole of Belgium straight away. They were held by the Battle of the Marne (September 6th to 10th). On September 26th they started the siege of Antwerp. On October 4th a British Naval Division reached Antwerp, but on the 10th it fell, and on the 15th the Germans reached Zeebrugge and Ostend. The only part of Belgium that remained in Allied hands was the Ypres salient and the country between Ypres and Nieuport. Thousands of Belgians fled to England and to Holland throughout August and September, but in October an overwhelming avalanche came into Holland from Antwerp. The Dutch interned the soldiers, in accordance with the Hague Convention. Many civilians were taken into private families, but 20,000 of them were housed in camps. In England most of the refugees received private hospitality at first, but as time went on many were absorbed into the war effort. On November 22nd, 1918, the Belgian Government was reinstated in Brussels.

The first refugees whom I saw in my life were Belgians arriving at Tilbury in October, 1914. I had just started to teach at Gravesend on the opposite shore of the Thames, and I used to take the ferry across in the late afternoons. In the dim light of Tilbury station I saw hordes of bewildered women and children with their treasures tied up in sheets (or sometimes, incongruously, they had nothing but a canary or parrot in a cage), and men, young and old, with strained faces. Few of them knew on what shore they had arrived—they thought they were being taken to Holland or France. I was pleased to hear French spoken again and full of curiosity: I welcomed them to my country, and listened thirstily to their stories of burning and bombarded towns and terrified flight. I went every day till a young man wearing an armlet told me I was a nuisance and that refugees were the concern of officials. I did not venture to poach any

more, but I had tasted blood, and I applied to the refugee committee for two Belgian girls to support and educate. My headmistress promised to take them into the school for nothing, but warned me that I might regret my offer. "Of course we ought all to help," she said, "but you get a very mixed bag in these sudden flights."

The first girl sent to me, Pauline, a typist of eighteen, was in fact rather disillusioning but my amour-propre was involved in her: I pretended to everybody that I found her charming and tried to cover up her disagreeable nature. She told me the first night she arrived that she could not share her room with another Belgian refugee as many of them were so very common: she hoped, not only that I should have no cause to complain about her, but that the reverse would also be the case. Rather dashed by this interview, I asked the committee to warn my second girl that she would have to share her room with me, as my landlady had no other accommodation, and that she had better not come if she objected.

Jenny, my next Belgian, a girl of twenty with fair hair, blue eyes, bright cheeks and gentle manner, appeared an angel of light, not only in contrast to the odious Pauline, but objectively, and I immediately became exceedingly proud of her. She had expected an old lady with white hair and was relieved to find me not very much older than herself. She was virgin soil as far as intellectual things went, as her mother, unhappy with an unfaithful husband, had kept her at home, and she had only had a few haphazard lessons from a visiting governess. Jenny was intelligent, without prejudices and very responsive—I found her refreshing and companionable. Pauline, of whom Jenny was ashamed, received one day a letter from a brother who had escaped later than she and been taken in by a rich family. They were willing to have her too. She apologised for deserting me, but pointed out that she had her future to consider. We parted with hypocritical warmth.

The war was remote from our Gravesend life, though occasionally I lay on the fields of Kent and heard the guns of the Western front, and once on a brilliant Sunday morning a sudden trembling seized the town: every house in it shook, every window rattled. A few seconds and again there was nothing but sunshine and silence. At that moment a warship at Chatham, twenty miles away, exploded and sank with all hands. In one street alone there were fifty widows, but no one ever explained how it hap-

pened. And once Jenny woke me up in the middle of the night and said—" there is a funny noise, my dear, and I see a dark thing, in the sky, long, so a cigar." " Go to sleep," I ordered, " it's only a train,"—but the noise growing louder, I went to the window and in fact saw a black thing against the moonlit night, long " so a cigar." At the next moment there was a light and a crash and I experienced my first bomb—a small thing we should think it now. The Zeppelin passed on its way to London leaving no killed or wounded.

In spite of this little excitement Gravesend was a backwater, and I often strained at my leash. Dr. Hilda Clark and Edmund Harvey had started relief for civilian victims of the war in France and I applied to go. Ruth Fry, in charge of the Friends' London office, granted me an interview, but it was in vain that I stressed my fluent French and willingness to do any kind of work. She pricked my bubble when she remarked—" you are engaged in a useful task here. What is your motive for wanting to leave it? Is it a genuine concern for Friends' work and the relief of the unfortunate, or only love of excitement? "

Baulked by the perspicacious Miss Fry, I was led by my love of excitement to hatch another plan. Jenny had received a letter from her sister. Her husband, a captain in the Belgian army, was a prisoner in Holland and had been moved to the punishment camp of Urk, an island in the Zuyder Zee. She and her three children were living with him, and she invited us to spend the summer holidays with them. I do not know how it was that the Foreign Office gave us permits to go on this unnecessary journey —perhaps they were moved by the pretty Belgian wanting to rejoin her family and needing a protectress.

The seas were dangerous but I was unafraid: not because I was brave, but because of a species of arrogance that persisted with me a long time: I believed in my star. When I was small I had noted with surprise the look of panic on the faces of relatives when on a rough sea, or in a trap drawn by runaway horses. " Don't they know," I thought, " that nothing can happen as long as I am here? " The same insolent confidence protected me from fear during all my journeys in the Four Years' War, though of the dozen or so boats that I travelled in, the majority were torpedoed when I wasn't there with my star to preserve them. Jenny was nervous: she had a sense that was the contrary of mine, belief in an early death. " It is too big for me, this universe," she said to me once, looking up at the stars, " and I am

too little for it—I am sure I can't live long in it." "Don't be silly, Jenny," I said crossly, but she was right. She had no bookish knowledge, but she was a wise girl, and although she was apparently well and strong, she had detected the seed of death within herself, and oddly enough had no desire to resist.

Urk was a small island four kilometres in circumference. an hour and a half in a steamer from the mainland. Jenny's sister had dark, smiling eyes, was quick and kind and capable : devoted to her children and her somewhat melancholy husband, but still with time for us. There were forty imprisoned officers. We dined at their mess, played tennis, and bathed with them. I was disappointed because they would not let me give them English lessons—I thought it would have relieved their tedium—but discovered later that it was because they were bent on escaping and were making tunnels below their camp. Jenny's brother-in-law thought of nothing else. He went about with money tied round his neck in case an opportunity to get away came suddenly. He was extremely bitter against the Germans and longed to carry on the fight against them.

From Urk I wrote in a letter to my brother :—" . . . the island is prettier than I had imagined. It has a village, spruce, neat and shining. Ships with bright sails crowd in its port or go out to fish. The inhabitants are dressed like Dutch dolls and have kind eyes and placid, stupid faces. The barrack where the officers are imprisoned is painted white with black shutters and is rather like a boat. It makes me think of Richard Middleton's 'Ghost Ship.' Do you remember—a ship with captain, officers and crew arrives on a village green somewhere north of Portsmouth ? The inhabitants do not turn a hair—they go on their way, do their work, and sell beer and bread to the ghost crew without comment. The same has happened here, only here there are French airmen, Belgian soldiers and English sailors in place of the ghost crew. The people of Urk sell them food and drink and provide sentinels to watch them. They go on milking their sheep, repairing their dykes, mending their nets and fishing without question or surprise, as though nothing unusual had occurred."

The forty officers were all desperadoes who had tried to escape from other fortresses and had been sent to Urk because of its remoteness from land. They were bitter against the Dutch ; they said they allowed Germans to get away but were strict with the Allies. The Germans made a similar charge, but undoubtedly the Dutch army, admiring military efficiency, was pro-German.

Dutch Big Business was too, believing that German capital and methods would develop industry and make Rotterdam the greatest shipping centre of the world; the people and the best of the thinking class, on the other hand, were for the Allies because they valued liberty more highly than wealth.

In Urk there were two French airmen who had made crash landings in Holland and three British naval officers—the rest were Belgian. There had been four Englishmen but one had swum out to a boat manned by his niece and got to the mainland just before our arrival. He had been arrested there but had feigned madness and was now in a hospital from which it was supposed he would find escape easy. These Englishmen belonged to the contingent of 5,000 naval men sent to Antwerp—too few and too late—just before it fell. They were bitter about this blunder: said that the Belgian commander had wanted to evacuate Antwerp with all its military stores as Warsaw had been evacuated by the order of the Tsar, but that we wouldn't let him and had promised to send him help—50,000 men if necessary—if they would hang on. Then this handful of men had arrived without guns—half had been extracted in safety and the other half left to the alternative of surrender to the Germans or escape into Holland, their retreat being cut. The bridges had gone up in smoke and the city was in flames when they left.

Hugh was the friendliest of the Englishmen. There was nothing extraordinary about him—he was true to his type and class, but he had gained much from his years at sea, and he was liked by everybody, even the Belgians who said that he was *bon comme un morceau de pain*. He was attracted to Jenny from the start, and indeed she was a lovely creature to have dropped from the sky on to the dull piece of earth where he was marooned. The first hint we had was that he appeared one day without his beard. Clean shaven he looked ten years younger but robbed of distinction; Jenny was long in growing reconciled to her boyish, beardless admirer. I left her in the middle of the courtship as I was anxious to see something of the Friends' work in Holland. It pleased me to slip into this illicitly and by-pass the London office, who had detected so efficiently the poverty of my motives.

At the beginning of the war Holland had been swamped by Belgian refugees—Ruth Fry says in "Quaker Adventure" that about half a million crossed the Dutch borders. The soldiers were interned and many of the civilians proceeded to England—still there were thousands left. Many were taken into Dutch

families, but 20,000 were housed in camps—Gouda, Ede, Nunspeet and Uden were the largest of these. The Friends had welfare workers living in these camps, organising occupations. With the labour available amongst the refugees, they had built over a hundred three-roomed wooden huts. I went to Gouda where my cousin was working, and found her living in one of the huts. It had a bathroom and a garden in front of it, and was an oasis in the refugee slum. Gouda was the worst of the camps—it was a vast acreage of greenhouses rented from a ruined Dutch nursery gardener and very bleak. My cousin was teaching the women to make rugs, another worker had an industry of bast shoes and classes of folk dancing and English. My job was to supervise the making of mattresses. The Dutch had made a present of thousands of yards of ticking and mountains of seaweed, and women had volunteered to make them into 1,500 mattresses. They were good souls but rough and unkempt. My memory of Gouda is of women with harsh and guttural speech, and of sewing recalcitrant material in an atmosphere heavy with dust, that smelt like a fish market. I felt that Ruth Fry had perhaps been right in emphasising the useful work I was employed in at home, and I was not sorry to return to it when the middle of September brought the school holidays to an end.

But I was sorry to leave Holland. I admired the way the country got more than twice as much sky as most places, not only by not interrupting it with mountains or hills, but by having so many canals and marshes where it was reflected. I had had a week-end in Amsterdam with Jenny and walked along its narrow streets cheek by jowl with large ships, and been greatly delighted by the Dutch painters who reminded me of Chaucer, because they looked at human beings with amused curiosity and tolerance and put no halos round them—so far I had seen little but Italian art—and because they made me realise the quality of the material world, the texture of fresh-baked bread and ripe apples and of the sunlight that comes through windows.

Had I stayed longer I should no doubt have found many things to compensate me for the unromantic work with the refugees. Miss Vulliamy who had initiated relief in Holland—an attractive woman always in a whirl of activity and excitement—had an interesting time welcoming prisoners who escaped from Germany, or were returned on an exchange basis. She also brought stimulus into the lives of the interned officers who were often let out on parole. I went with her sometimes to a café where she

met these men, and felt that she had brought flirtation to a height of perfection rare with the English—to the point, in fact, where it can be considered an art—and I envied her her gift.

My friend Mary Rees also got a great deal out of the work. "It wasn't unromantic," she burst out indignantly when I told her how it had seemed to me. "I remember lovely expeditions with the children—the ponds covered with white water-crowfoot, miles of tulips, and an old man who let us gather armfuls of them; bathes in a phosforescent sea, and the shining of the refugees' eyes when we brought them a Christmas tree lit up with candles. I was very fond of our cook and I visited her afterwards in her home in Antwerp. Her husband was a butcher, and I slept in a bed in the wall and heard the meat creaking on the hooks all night. The Flemish children were wonderful at country dances: I taught them these and other workers taught singing. They liked patriotic songs best. They had intense national pride. They said that after the war they would pay the Dutch for having them—it irked them to be receiving charity. The work we gave them was a great boon—it not only kept them busy, but gave them a little pocket money. They had nothing at all, not even for a stamp or a cotton bobbin. So humiliating.

"Some of the men workers introduced the scout movement and got Walloons and Flemings to work together in mixed companies. They had always refused to before this. The scout movement is good because it is international and some boys were scouts already. I'm afraid we didn't have Guides. The girls always seemed busy doing the work of the camp—it was the boys who were at a loose end. It was very gloomy for the refugees. The camps were run by the Dutch military and guarded by sentinels. They couldn't go out without a pass. We made a great difference to them. The workers who stuck it and stayed in one place were the best—the refugees hated changes, and they didn't steal from people they got fond of. The most popular worker was a Froebel-trained teacher—she was kindly and tolerant and very lively. Some of the highbrows didn't fit in so well.

"I had some exciting times going to the frontier to welcome prisoners released from Ruhleben. There were a number of old sea captains in the first batch—some lying on their backs because of weak hearts. I remember one flinging his arms round me and crying. Nearly all the Dutch I met were pro-Ally except the military. Rotterdam was a hotbed of spies, but Amsterdam had a pro-British tradition. I enjoyed it. I got very fond of the

Belgians—it wasn't difficult to pick up Flemish as I knew German."

I left Jenny in Urk, and when she wrote to me that she was going to marry Hugh I was glad for I felt that he was a good strong man who would protect her against the life she feared. When she came back to Gravesend she told me that she had been hurt by my attitude—she thought I would know that she wasn't in love and didn't want to marry. When Hugh had proposed she had said to him—" vous m'êtes sympathique, Monsieur, mais rien de plus." Then one day he had gone a walk with her and kissed her, and on their return had introduced her to everyone as his fiancée, and she had not had the presence of mind to deny it. Her sister and brother-in-law had been so pleased with what they thought was a *bonne partie* that she hadn't had the heart to disappoint them, but every night she had cried in the big bed in the wall of the Dutch cottage where we had slept together, and she thought that I would know this by instinct. I found conversation with Jenny about her lover rather complicated because she could not pronounce any " H's." " But Jenny, you know that you really love him quite a lot," I would say. " Yes, I think I love 'Ugh a little now," she would say doubtfully. " Not me—him," I would protest. " Yes, not you—'Ugh," she would say. " Never mind," she would go on more cheerfully, " I shall have a baby and you will be the mothergod." " Not 'Ugh—I," I would reply.

Hugh was given leave by an indulgent Dutch Government—on parole, of course. He came to England, married Jenny and took her back to internment with him. I felt melancholy at the wedding, and rather insulted at the way the couple went off in the middle of the breakfast, leaving me to gape at Hugh's unknown relatives. After all, Jenny was my discovery—no one had asked me if I would mind living alone in Gravesend without her. The relatives were nice, but I had nothing to say to them. " Isn't it funny, my dear," Jenny had said to me. " 'Ugh's father is a priest." " That's all right—it's quite respectable in England," I had explained.

Six months later Jenny wrote to me from Holland. She was getting very fond of 'Ugh and was going to have a baby. She was happy about this although she said that she had " quelques appréhensions "—apprehensions that were justified. Jenny died in her sleep with a clot on her brain a month before her baby was due to be born.

CHAPTER 2

WITH REFUGEES IN FRANCE IN 1916

By the summer of 1916 the Friends' work in France had expanded so much that they were willing to send me out to it. My brother Maurice had begun working with them in 1915, and I knew from him that they were helping to start life again in the area devastated by the battle of the Marne—building wooden huts so as to get families out of the dug-outs they were living in, distributing furniture and clothing, seeds, tools and livestock. I had two cousins who were helping to nurse in a hospital for civilians in Sermaize and knew that Marjorie Fry was out there and that Edith Pye had a maternity home at Chalons. The last thing I expected was to be sent down to Samoëns in the Alps of Haute Savoie. I had had an idea that I should be really in things at last—just behind the front line with bombs falling round me. I was disappointed.

The Maison Hospitalière at Samoëns was a large hotel, shut because of the war, and taken by the Friends as a convalescent home for French refugees and repatriés—the families that in 1916 were being sent back by the Germans from Occupied France: they came via Switzerland, and we used to go down to meet them at the frontier—sick people, orphans, imbeciles and mothers with large families—all those who could not be made use of in food production or for digging trenches. Our hotel could house up to eighty women and children of all ages from babies to grandmothers, and had an English staff of ten or twelve. Most of the children were unaccompanied, but there were some mothers, for the Friends did not like to split up families, who had lost everything except each other, unless it was necessary. Most of the refugees came from overcrowded tenements in Paris, and were chosen by Dr. Clark because they were pre-tubercular. It was very much like what we would now call an evacuation hostel. We have come to know in England the hard work these hostels mean—changing babies, lifting up toddlers, washing napkins, consoling screaming children, separating scratchers and biters from their victims, making peace between angry mothers. Yet I don't remember much of this. I recall a sense of outrage when on night duty that anyone so small and so pretty as Marcelline could make

such a big mess in her cot: I know that we felt frustrated because we were safe in our valley far from the war, and that it seemed dull to be in a society where there were no men, but in general memory plays with me the trick of D. H. Lawrence's "Twilight"—"a single star in a veil of light glimmers: litter of day is gone from sight." My single stars are three: the vivacity and charm of the children, the excitement of living in the Alps, and the pleasure I had in some of my colleagues.

This pleasure was a real one: it seemed an adventure getting to know them. Women segregated together are pitied, and it is not realised what compensations there are; for friendship is, on the whole, a new thing for women. I am not thinking of comradeship—that there has always been for both sexes wherever there are common effort and common suffering. Friendship is something different—it is the result of education, a flower of culture, the marriage of true minds. For long it was thought of as only possible between men. The ancients assumed this when they laid down the axioms of friendship—it is a thing only for the good or noble, they said, meaning, of course, men. Women have throughout the centuries been looked upon as existing for their children and for men—as rivals, even enemies of each other. But in our day a new conception has been born. They have personalities of their own—they exist for themselves as well as for other people, just as men do, and they can give each other of their riches. Shakespeare had a notion of this—he understood Beatrice's loyalty to Hero and the pleasure Celia had in Rosalind, for Renaissance woman had a brief moment of emancipation and personal life, eclipsed almost until our times. Even now few men realise how much stimulus a woman gets from another woman's mind, how much she enjoys her gifts and charm—and this without any erotic element entering into the relationship.

Of my colleagues the most romantic was Dr. Katharine MacPhail. She was unassuming—small, with a mass of wavy short hair and a touch of melancholy in her Scotch voice, but she was romantic because of what she had done. In 1914 she had gone with the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit to Serbia. She told us of thousands dying of gangrenous wounds, of paratyphoid and enteric and typhus. She explained to us how heroically the Serbs had fought, how the Austrians had only held Belgrade for eleven days and then been driven back, but how the 70,000 prisoners they had left behind had wrought greater havoc than bayonet or bomb, for the typhus they brought with them had swamped the

country like a tidal wave. She had seen hospitals where the men overflowed from the beds on to the floors of the wards and into the passages and outbuildings. Now the army had been driven out and Serbia was lost. Dr. MacPhail had caught typhus herself—that explained her short hair, still uncommon in those days, also why she had taken a peaceful job such as ours was at Samoëns, for she was still convalescent. But she wanted to go back to her Ser-rbs : they were not wild savages as people had imagined—they were wonderful, brave and uncomplaining and grateful for help.

The Directrice at Samoëns was a Welsh woman, daughter of an Oxford professor. She was not young, but she was still beautiful, with wavy, black hair, green-grey eyes and a high colour, and she had a lovely speaking voice. She spoke excellent French and had a pleasing humour—she enjoyed whatever was characteristic amongst our motley group of women and children : she had caught something of the French gift of observation and of describing everyday incidents in exact language. In the evenings she read poetry to us, and her deep, vibrating voice made a sonnet like Michael Drayton's " Since there's no help " sound like an intimate experience. The night before Dr. MacPhail left us she made us each compose a sonnet in her honour. But she had a lonely personality—we admired and enjoyed her at a distance.

Most of the children had had no schooling since the beginning of the war and were tired of running wild, so I decided that I would give the over-sixes lessons in the morning. Story-telling, play-acting and handwork were the chief items of the curriculum, but I got to know the children well through my little school. I fell back on Greek stories, the favourites of my own nursery days, but I found them too realistic for these children who had been through the horrors of war. When I told them how the companions of Odysseus had eaten lotus fruit and forgotten their wives and children they groaned aloud, because they thought that their fathers and brothers away at the front might be forgetting them : when Troy was in flames, they told me how they had seen houses burning in Rheims, where many of them had lived through weeks of bombardment. Jeanne Santerre said that her sister had been burnt alive, and André Filibert, a little boy obsessed by death, said he would rather drown in our Samoëns river than be grilled alive. Marcel was another boy obsessed by death. He had been put in a row with his mother and sister and other hostages to be shot, and pardoned at the last moment. The

of saving one's own skin, and the sooner it was over, the better. This was the year of serious mutinies among the French troops (carefully kept from general knowledge). With the stupid, but in some ways fortunate, optimism of the British, I could not believe in defeat, and I listened unshaken to this voice of despair. Had I known how near the Germans were at that moment to succeeding in their submarine campaign, I might have felt differently, but when I arrived in Paris the world rang with the news that the sinking of the *Lusitania* had brought America into the war: the tide was on the turn.

CHAPTER 3

WITH SERBS IN CORSICA

On July 28th, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. The three Austrian invasions of 1914 were repulsed by the Serbs. On the last occasion Belgrade fell on December 2nd, 1914, but was retaken on December 15th. The Austrians fled, leaving 70,000 prisoners behind them. These prisoners brought typhus with them and the epidemic spread throughout Serbia. Austria left Serbia alone in 1915 until October. In this month Bulgaria, enticed by a promise of the part of Macedonia, taken by Serbia in 1913, came into the war on the German side. The Austrians, reinforced by the Germans under Mackensen, attacked Serbia from the north and north-west. On October 8th, 1915, they took Belgrade, and on October 12th the Bulgarians invaded Serbia from the east. The Serb army was now outnumbered by more than two to one. French and British divisions were sent from Gallipoli to Salonika to help Serbia. But the Allies who crossed the Serb frontier, found a superior Bulgarian force in their way, and fell back on Salonika. The Serb army decided to retreat rather than surrender, but the only way open to it now was across the mountains of Montenegro and Albania to the Adriatic. They began their retreat on November 30th. It has been estimated that 100,000 soldiers perished on the Albanian retreat, and about 50,000 civilians (mainly boys) and prisoners of war. Some refugee women and children had gone by train to Salonika and been shipped to Corsica. The bulk of the 150,000 surviving soldiers were taken to Corfu, but 10,000 were shipped to Bizerta. In 1916 the reconstituted Serb army sailed from Corfu and joined the French and British at Salonika. (In 1917 Bizerta became the headquarters of the Serb Reserve Army; the volunteer Yugoslavs from America were trained there and sent to Salonika.) In October, 1916, the Serbs took from the Bulgars Kaimakchalan, a mountain 8,000 feet high on the borders between Greek and Serbian Macedonia, and the Entente forces captured Monastir in November. But apart from this and an abortive attack in April, 1917, the Entente forces made no serious offensive until the autumn of 1918. The half million Allied troops locked up in Salonika were called by the Germans their "largest internment camp," but in the autumn of 1918 the Serbs as their spearhead drove the Bulgars back to Bulgaria and the Germans and Austrians across the Danube. Armistice with Bulgaria was signed on September 30th and with Austria-Hungary on November 3rd, and with Germany on November 11th, 1918. On July, 1917, in the Corfu Manifesto, the Serb Government and the Yugoslav Committee had proclaimed a Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; this kingdom now came into being and was later called Yugoslavia. The Serbs who had numbered four and a half million in 1914, by adding to their pre-war kingdom the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Croatia, Slovenia

Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia and the Voyvodina became the dominant partners in a country with a population of nearly fourteen million.

CORSICA

In April, 1917, my brother Maurice was lent by the Friends to the Serbian Relief Fund, who sent him to Bizerta to see what could be done for the thousands of disabled Serbs in North Africa. Soon after his arrival he asked the London Committee of the S.R.F. for two workers to help him. To me he wrote—" have you any notion of trying it? The idea is to be a sort of angel of comfort to some hundreds of men, maimed, halt and blind, who live in a barracks without any attention being paid them from unofficial sources. It would mean making your own job."

With the arrogance of youth I felt at once that I was the pre-ordained angel for these men, although I knew no Serb. Fortunately Lady Grogan, who selected staff for the S.R.F., was a discerning woman: she chose an experienced worker, Margaret McFie, and allowed me to slip in with her, as she felt that I was malleable and might be moulded to fit in with needs. As Bizerta was a military zone, permits were difficult to obtain—and in the meantime, we were sent to Corsica, where the S.R.F. had already been working for a year and a half for Serb women and children. For Margaret McFie this was a return to old haunts. She had been an orderly in a hospital in Serbia in 1915, and come out with the refugees to Corsica.

Before starting I had lunch in his London chambers with Will Arnold-Forster and Ka Cox, whom he was soon to marry. Ka had been my earliest grande passion when I was a raw fresher at Newnham. She was in the van of culture and progress in those old days. She wore becoming clothes with Peter Pan collars, while the rest of us wrestled with things supported by whalebone that cut our necks, had little silver ornaments in her hair, belonged to the Fabian Society, went on walking tours with poetic young men from Bedales—very chaste walking tours, but bold for those days—rode with Lowes Dickinson, conversed with Darwins and Cornfords, boated with Rupert Brooke, acted in " Comus " with the élite of undergraduate Cambridge, had the walls of her room at College papered with plain brown paper, knew the poems of Meredith and Francis Thompson by heart, and talked of art, philosophy and literature like an initiate. My shy, schoolgirl heart burst with admiration of her, and indeed at

nineteen she was a wonder of poise, maturity and charm. I had not seen her since College days, but when I heard that she had been with the Serbs in Corsica, it lent the task to which I was being called, prestige and glamour.

" The S.R.F. are doing a fine piece of work there," she told me. " You know what relief very often is—a mere doling out of charity with no purpose behind it, and no co-ordination in its carrying out. The Corsican work has been sound from its start. The refugees to begin with were dumped into huge barracks by the French, sheltered and fed, and that was all. The S.R.F. has planted them in family groups in the villages, opened schools, dispensaries, churches and workshops for them, and are doing all they can to nurture their cultural life and make their exile not merely tolerable but beneficial. Margaret McFie is a tower of strength. She is quite young—about twenty-five—but she has a genius for organising. Ask her advice about some situation and she will say ' it is all very difficult and complicated—there are a hundred snags,' and then she will proceed to outline a plan for dealing with the problems and you will see she is always right. She is an excellent linguist and speaks Serb fluently already. She got a First in French at Oxford." (As Ka and I had only got Seconds in History, this impressed us.)

" I know," I said. " Lindsay Scott told me that before the war the only thing she was interested in was old French Epic on which she was researching at the Sorbonne, and that he could not imagine her doing anything active or practical. ' I think of her always,' he said, ' in an exquisite and critical repose.' "

Margaret McFie and I started on our journey early in June. She was tall and dark, and as reposeful as Lindsay Scott had suggested—indeed she had something of a convent air about her, for she had been brought up in a French convent school, though she was no longer a Catholic and there was nothing nun-like in her speech. She had acquired a knowledge of the world, was realistic and unshockable, and had a manner of describing things that was, in a quiet way, pungent and racy. I got on with her at once and found the journey with her amusing.

She told me more about the work in Corsica. " When the refugees arrived the French put them into prisons or barracks wherever there was room. Ka and I worked together in an old penitentiary at Chiavari across the bay of Ajaccio. It was completely isolated. Food was brought in little boats. Two thousand refugees were jammed into it. Most of them had come via

Salonika, but some had been in the Albanian retreat—we used to bandage their wounded feet every day. The refugees would have gone mad or jumped into the sea if they had been left there. There was nothing for them to do—it was terrible. Then Ka and I went into the Corsican villages to see if we could find looms, and the peasants climbed into their attics and brought down their old spindles and combs for the wool, and their looms too, and we took them back and they were all exactly right—just what the Serbs wanted. And then an old man said that he could make looms. So we started the workshops. And Marjorie Fry came over from the Friends' work in France. We had a conference and decided to put the refugees in villages and to give them all work—partly because their allowance from the French is so small and mainly for their morale. Among the men there are cobblers and potters and agricultural workers—they grow wonderful tomatoes in Ucciani. The Scottish women lend us nurses—they do all the medical work. And Evelyn Radford (she isn't here now) scrutinised all the Serbian designs and looked after the dyes they used. When they were westernised and debased she told them that wasn't what we wanted. And they were pleased because they take great pride in their patterns—they have an almost ritual significance for them, and quite often they are part of their lives. They will tell you of some quite conventional design—' that's the beehive we moved before the war,' or ' those are wheatears I made to bring a good harvest,' or ' these are roses I worked for my bridal year.' "

In Paris we went to an Institut for the Ré-education des Mutilés started by Maurice Barrès, and gleaned many ideas from it. We also went to dinner with a couple said to be great guns in the philanthropic world. The man was American—his wife of some vague nationality but vociferously American because of her marriage. I see from a letter home that she told us how the war would now be run on a grand scale, and how when it was over America would undertake the moral re-education of Germany. They were going to bring over 100,000 aeroplanes and 7,000 miles of railway. When her husband, a meek little man, wondered if 7,000 miles would get into France, she explained scornfully that they would, " zigzagging about." She railed at the selfishness of French women, and gave the impression that but for her and her daughters there would be no canteens and no kindness to refugees. While she talked, her husband killed flies, making all the dishes on the table rattle, and muttering for each one, " that's the equiva-

lent of a bosche." Margaret McFie and I reflected when we at last escaped that it was unlucky that they should represent our new ally, but that, fortunately, the French would not understand them (for they only spoke English) and in any case had a poor opinion of most Anglo-Saxons.

We went from Nice to Ile Rousse on a ship blue with French soldiers on leave, and then had a long, slow journey by train through Corsica to Ajaccio. We stopped for half an hour at Bocagnano, the mountain village where the S.R.F. had planted, in family houses, a large number of Serb women and children and a few old men. Margaret McFie had worked amongst them for a year, so the whole colony was on the platform to greet her. It was an impressive greeting. They were extremely excited—they surged round her with cries of rapture, kissing her hands or any part of her they could get hold of. They laughed and cried, shouting what I supposed meant, " she has come back to us, our Mother, our Sister, our Beloved." Actually all I could detect was the word " Magavee," their version of her name, and I always called her this afterwards. The Serbs had put on their best clothes in her honour, and I saw the brilliant reds and yellows and deep browns of their national costume for the first time. I was moved by the scene—so exotic and unexpected. I felt excited too. Was it possible that the demure, detached, sensible Miss McFie whom I had been travelling with for the last week, and who was so sick on the sea, was really a demi-goddess—a kind of saint? Later I thought that though she wasn't our idea of a saint—too strong and matter of fact—perhaps she was more like the mediæval saints than our stained-glass window conception of them. Even Sveti Sava, the greatest of the Serbian saints, had taught his people, I discovered, not only how to plough, weave, make rope and put windows into houses, but also how to make cheese and yoghourt.

When we got to Ajaccio, the headquarters of the Serbian Relief Fund in Corsica, I was alarmed to hear that Magavee was being reserved to deputise for workers due for leave, and that I was to serve my apprenticeship in Bocagnano—alarmed because I knew how disappointed the refugees would be. Otherwise it was an attractive proposition as Ajaccio, though it had a splendid situation on a huge Mediterranean gulf, was very hot at this season, and it was better to be in the highlands.

In Bocagnano I found that my first business was to master the Serb language. As I had to replace Gladys Barton, the S.R.F.

worker there, in six weeks' time and there was no hope of an interpreter, this was urgent. Even before the end of these weeks I was sometimes left in charge of the community.

On one of these occasions I went to inspect the workrooms. This was a duty I enjoyed. I liked to watch the old Serb grandmothers spinning the wool with fingers that were still deft and supple or dyeing it rich colours, often from dyes they had made themselves from toad-stools or the bark of trees while the younger ones wove it into the geometrical patterns of the Pirot carpets, or embroidered delicate muslins with stylised flowers and insects and other designs handed down to them from Byzantine days. Some were usually out in the village street, setting up the looms, a task which needed plenty of space. But to-day the workrooms were empty. I went into the village and saw our cobbler sitting lazily on his doorstep. I passed the carpenter's shop : it was also silent. Lower down I found a crowd of women and children, dressed in their brightest clothes. They explained their idleness to me in a chorus, but the only word I could disentangle was Sveti Ilia. At last I came on an old schoolmaster, who had a smattering of French. "Sveti Ilia—Saint Ilia. Beaucoup de feu," he said, pointing to the sky with a sweep of his arm. Later when I understood Serb better they told me that Elijah would call down fire on their crops or barns or strike their cattle lame if they worked on his day. He is one of the few saints who are still alive, as he went to Heaven without dying in his chariot of fire—St. Michael is another. Most are with the dead and on their days are given the consecrated wheat boiled with nuts and sugar called *zhito* or *kolyivo*, which is always made for the souls of the departed. There are various legends about him, invented perhaps to account for his vindictive character. The devil deceived him and told him that some man was sleeping with his wife. Overcome with fury, he entered his bed-chamber and slew the sleeping pair, only to find in the morning that he had killed his parents. (At least this is the story told me by a peasant girl at Umka on the Sava, where a couple of years later I spent the day of Sveti Ilia.)

This was my first experience of the interference of saints in the year's routine, but I soon got used to it; it happened frequently. It gives to peasant life in the Balkans the leisure, colour and rhythm which ours had in the Middle Ages, but sometimes it was inconvenient. The moon, though not a saint, interfered too. Once I had to wait seventeen days for the starting of a tanning

industry. This could only be successful if begun at the time of the new moon—otherwise the skin would breed worms.

I worked hard at Serbian. The language is baffling at first with seven cases, two aspects of the verb, perfective and imperfective and a dual as well as a plural. It has six different words for sister-in-law and distinguishes between all the various kinds of human relationship. This was important in Serbia where relatives used to live in large patriarchal families. Moreover a Serb commits incest if he marries his cousin—not just his first cousin, whom he calls sister and considers as near to him as the daughter of his parents—but even more remote ones. It is like Russian but much easier and has many Turkish words, which Russian hasn't. It is the softest of the Slav languages and has great charm.

To know it in its power, one must hear a Serb chant the Kossovo ballads. The first time I had this experience was after a dance, given by Yugoslav officers in Bizerta. An old soldier was called in. He sat down, quite unembarrassed by the foreign women and his superior officers, and began to chant to the accompaniment of the gusla. This is the national one-stringed instrument. He had made it himself out of some karubia wood and given it the traditional dragon's head and cunning carving. He chanted his song with so much passion that I thought it was his own experience he was telling, for Serbs often improvise. It was about a mother whose son had gone to the wars. There was much about the bravery and suffering of the son, and much about the waiting and longing of the mother. The singer lost the sense of time so completely that it seemed improbable that he would ever stop. The officers were also absorbed and transported—even on us strangers the loud and melancholy chanting had a hypnotic effect. They told me afterwards how for centuries these ballads had never been written down but were transmitted from generation to generation like the Homeric lays, and how this poetry had kept alive the national consciousness of the Serbs as potently as the orthodox church. Without these memories, and without their religious difference, they would certainly have followed the easier path and become merged with their Turkish conquerers, as Gauls had with Franks and Normans. The strength of these ballads lies in their tragedy—for only a tragic conception of life is enduring and provides strong enough meat for humanity to feed on. Kossovo was not a victory—it was defeat: it was annihilation: it meant five hundred years of servitude. Yet Kossovo Day is still the most

important of Serbian holidays—no Empire celebrations for them, no Quartorze Juillet nor Bismarck Tag nor Independence Day. Year after year they celebrate the ruin of their hopes on the Field of Blackbirds, and their heroes who died in vain. When people say to me that the Serbs are a superficial people with no great future, I remember this. And as I write I know that I am wrong: their heroes did not die in vain. They did not die in vain, because no Serb would admit this: because the Serbs and their brother Slavs are ready to perish again and again for freedom, as they have shown in this war. And so long as they keep the Kossovo spirit, so long will it be impossible to extinguish their race.

One day Magavee came to Bocagnano to visit her old friends. It was the Feast of St. Pantaleimon and the day of the Slava of the cobbler and his family, and we were invited to share in the celebrations. The Slava is the most important of Serb festivals—traditional to them and to the Macedonians, but to none other of the Orthodox Church. Every Serb and Macedonian has a saint who is the patron of his whole family—he has a saint also after whom he is called and whose day he keeps as we keep birthdays: this tradition he holds in common with others of the Orthodox Church, Greeks, Bulgars and Russians, but the Slava is something much more important and has descended from days when there were tribal gods. This patron saint was chosen by his ancestor in place of the god on the day he was converted to Christianity. The Slava is a long series of drinking, eating and rejoicing. Guests are counted like fine gold: the more that come and the more they eat and drink, the prouder are their hosts—indeed it is not uncommon for Serbs to spend a year's savings on the hospitality of this day. There are many ritual performances in connection with the Slava, but these mostly take place before the guests arrive—the lighting of candles, the waving of incense before the ikon of the saint, the sprinkling of the family with a sprig of basil dipped in holy water, the blessing and breaking of the cake baked of white flour and marked with a cross and the monogram of Jesus. When we came in the lunch was set, but I noted with surprise that Magavee and I were the only women who sat at the table—the rest were men, while the grandmother, wife and daughters waited on us, but she told me this was usual in Serbia. We began with toasts drunk in brandy. We toasted the gracious God, the cobbler's family, the Holy Trinity, the Serbs who were fighting on the Salonika front, the Serbs who

were left behind in Serbia, and the great and glorious allies represented by Magavee and me. Then we ate roast sucking pig, tender as chicken with salad and many sweetmeats. After we drank thick, sticky Turkish coffee and brandy again because we had omitted to toast the Corsicans and quarrels must be forgotten on such a day, and when everybody's head was going round, we all went out into the village street and, joining hands, danced in a ring the slow ceremonial dance of the kolo that is supposed to be a relic of sun-worship. Magavee, who kept her poise all through the brandy and rich food, explained this to me. She said that it was danced either in a ring, spiral or line and that each district and festival had its own kolo distinguished by the varying of the step. She said that the dish which I had thought was cold pudding was the *kolyivo* and was eaten because Saint Pantaleimon was amongst the dead. It had been adopted by the Serbs when they had been taught to give up their animal sacrifices but had wanted something instead. These links with the pagan past delighted me, but as I felt I should take them in better when I was more sober, we said good-bye to our hosts, and I retired to sleep off my first Slava.

Apart from the fascination of the Serbs and their mediæval outlook and customs, life in Bocagnano had interest and even a lyrical quality. The air of the Corsican mountains had a tang, and the pungent odour of the maquis was a tonic. Gladys Barton had a warm, vivid personality and a lovely voice. She had picked up Serbian airs and sang them in the evening. She was very feminine and a good mother to the exiles, though apt to have favourites and to grow exasperated with those who had developed the refugee mentality and were exorbitant in their demands. These were mainly for clothes, pots and pans and pails, something extra for a delicate child, or a little medicine for an old woman. I started a kindergarten for the children who were too young for the Serbian school, and they were delighted to be occupied, and drilled and played with in the garden of the cottage where we lived with an ancient Corsican couple. Monsieur was a rugged type, and as he only spoke dialect, I could not understand him, but Madame conversed in French, and talked to me like a bergerette—" you are young now," she used to say. " Make the most of it—old age comes fast. You must gather rosebuds now, my pretty, soon it will be too late." I don't know where she thought the rosebuds grew, perhaps at the Orphanage a little outside our village, where besides Serb boys there were two

young men. The boys were all survivors from the Albanian retreat—some of them as young as eleven and twelve. The terror of the Bulgars had been so great, and the belief that they killed even male children so prevalent, that mothers had besought the soldiers to take their sons away with them, and schoolmasters had gone through the villages ringing bells and collecting all the boys they could muster for the flight over the mountains. In charge of these lads were the two men—a young English professor of philosophy and a Slovene schoolmaster. The young Englishman was a character, not at all a typical product of Rugby and Oxford. The public school had not robbed him of his explosive spontaneity, nor had the University lent him either its famous accent or its affectation of cynicism—very fashionable as these were in those days. For a Quaker he was hot-tempered. We went round the Corsican houses together, taking inventories of the damage their Serb occupants had done to them, and I often had to intervene in the squalls that blew up between the professor of philosophy and the angry landlords. He was excellent with the boys, and though, when roused, he used to slap their heads and thunder at them, they were very fond of him. He had all sorts of nicknames for them—Grande la Bouche and Faun, Granny and Amerikanski Bik (American Bull), and he ragged them and fondled them like an affectionate brother. I watched him diving and swimming and racing with them in the stream. We used to discuss Conrad and Meredith—the favourite books of those days and poetry. (" I believe we are in the heyday of a great poetic revival," I remember him saying.) And, of course, the Serbs, of whom he had grown fond. All the same, I don't think that he was a rosebud in my Corsican Madame's sense. The Slovene belonged more to this category—he had expressive blue eyes and golden hair, and sitting in the garden in the evening, watching the clouds that sailed across Monte D'Ora, and the forest fires that flamed on the opposite hillside, listening to the crickets in the trees and the liquid rustlings of the maize leaves, while he told me in a low, vibrant voice the wrongs of his people or of his adventures in Siberian prisons—for he had deserted from the Austrian army early in the war—I was conscious sometimes of a brush from the wing of romance.

The Slovene told me a great deal about the history of Serbia. He had been born outside it, but in some ways it was easier for me to get my initiation from a Slav whose country had been steeped for centuries in an elaborate and articulate culture, and

though he regarded Austria as the Arch Enemy and Oppressor, I could see that he had learned a good deal from her. This initiation into the life, legends and language of a people till then unknown to me, and little known to the world, was exciting, and that and my work absorbed me so much that Corsica was just a background, like a tapestry. All the same, I did once climb Monte D'Ora by moonlight, though it was impossible to persuade any of the Serbs to come too. They had had their bellyful of mountains in the retreat, and in any case are not sentimental about scenery. I sampled Corsican wine, the headiest of the Mediterranean vintage, till I could scarcely find my bed, swam in a warm sea at Ajaccio, and had a long conversation with a melancholy gendarme, whose colleague had just been shot by a mountain brigand. " Ah, yes, Mademoiselle," he said. " Life is hard and full of dangers. But for you also, I know c'est bien dur. What a sacrifice for you to leave your country and live in these savage mountains amongst two savage peoples. I know you are a Sister of Mercy—you are inspired by duty and your religion : all the same, quelle noblesse, quel sacrifice." When the gendarme left me I sat for a while under a Spanish chestnut tree, sniffing at the cistus, arbutus, rosemary, wormwood, sage and thyme that made up the odour of the maquis. The mountain air, the sun, the steep gorge below, the thought that the Slovene was coming again to tell me about Serbia that evening—all these things elated me. " Noblesse ? " I thought. " Sacrifice ? "

If I had had to spend the winter in Bocagnano, I should perhaps have thought that the gendarme was right, but in September Lady Grogan wrote that she had received permits for us to go to Bizerta. Miss Olive Lodge came to replace me, and at the beginning of October, when the mountains were covered with cloud and the glory of the summer had gone, Magavee and I set out on our travels again.

CHAPTER 4

WITH SERBS IN NORTH AFRICA

1. ARRIVAL IN BIZERTA

To Bizerta we sailed from Marseilles on the *Biskra* late in October, 1917.

We arrived at the quayside of Bizerta at 7 a.m. on October 22nd. My brother Maurice ran on deck as soon as the gangway was placed, looking very well and handsome in his khaki uniform, and extremely pleased to see us—he had an open, expansive nature and did not conceal his feelings: this accounted, perhaps, for his popularity with foreigners.

Bizerta at first acquaintance is stern and forbidding. It was the most important French naval base in the southern Mediterranean in the last war, and a garrison town. I was conscious, as we approached it from the sea, of forts, barracks, a mass of European buildings—warehouses, flats, hotels—while beyond the city I saw a ring of bare, unfriendly hills, where nothing grew but stubbly grass and an occasional gnarled olive tree or cactus. There was nothing to suggest Africa, though when we explored it we found an Arab town. As we had never seen one before we were impressed by the white-domed, windowless houses and the shops that were like caves, with a turbaned shopkeeper sitting on a mat surrounded with brightly coloured textiles (probably from Manchester), or a few pots and pans—but it is very poor compared with Tunis or Algiers. The pride of the town was its promenade, by the sea, fringed with dwarf palm trees, but it was too glaring and shadeless to enjoy except in the evening. The glory of Bizerta is its large lagoon or lake as it is called there, where its warships glower, but this is hidden from view. It is joined to the sea by a canal. At the far end of it one could see the lights of Ferryville and the Arsenal twinkling at night. On each side of it, anchored like white-sailed ships, there are Berber villages, but you only see these things if you cross the canal and climb through olive yards and maize fields two miles up to Ben Negro, the hill behind Bizerta. The streets of the town were always crammed with traffic—Arabs and Berbers with donkey carts or camels, a few military cars and lorries hooting their way past them, and soldiers and sailors in every kind of uniform,

mostly Colonial French—but they were rather confusing than picturesque.

We spent the first days being introduced to officials, getting our flat ready, and going over the barracks where we were going to work. Caserne Lambert was the main centre. It was a huge, white, solidly-built barracks with verandahs, adequate enough, but depressing because of the men in it. Maurice's workshops were the one cheerful thing there. He had been in Bizerta about six months and had got them going well. There were about three hundred working in them with Serb master-craftsmen as instructors—shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, brush makers, tin-smiths and cane-chair weavers. There was a Serb major in charge, a rough, bustling fellow, reputed to be a severe disciplinarian, but the excuse was that the men would never have been stirred from their lethargy without firm handling, and that they were learning something useful. Only the masters were paid—the men were given tobacco or extra wine, but were looked on as apprentices. In other rooms there were schools where a couple of hundred were being taught to read and write, for most of them were illiterate. Maurice had helped in the setting up of a printing press where disabled men were also working. This produced ABC's, French grammars and Serbian folk songs and legends. He did the accounts of the workshops and kept them supplied with materials, but he no longer had much say in the running of them. It was not for this going concern that he wanted us. It was for the *grands mutilés*, shell shocked and nerve cases, who could not work in the shops.

These men filled half a dozen rooms in Lambert. Most of them were in bed, though some sat up, dressed in the blue French uniform which all Serb soldiers wore. Some were yellow and withered with prolonged dysentery or had the unnatural pallor of epilepsy, others were paralysed after fever, crippled through frost bite, or had had all their vitality burned out of them by malaria. There were blind men and men without hands or arms. Some of them were tremblers, shaking night and day without pause. The sight of them reminded me of a passage from Bacon's Essays which I had learned when I was a schoolgirl—" these wait upon the shore of death and waft unto him to draw near, wishing above all others to see his star, that they might be led to his place and be cut off before their hour." They did not move when we came in—probably because we were accompanied by an officer. One rather elderly man, who was obviously dying, said that he wanted

to learn French. We gave him the little grammar from the printing press. He could not see the words but said it would be all right when the sun came out.

The disabled men were all technically *reformés* (discharged), but Bizerta, which at this time was like an armed camp, did not allow civilian Serbs within it, so they were subject to the diet and discipline of the regular army.

At the camp of Nador, three miles out of Bizerta, at the top of a bare hill, there were some thousands of Serbs—or Yugoslavs as they were called, as most of them had come from America and were originally from Bosnia, Slovenia, Croatia or Herzegovina and had emigrated because under Austrian or Hungarian rule poverty had made life intolerable. The majority of these men were volunteers for the Salonika front and were in training. They had no reading room or social centre—nothing in the evenings but unlit wooden huts with mud or dust all round them, for there was no Y.M.C.A. in Bizerta. But as well as these sound men, there were at Nador some hundreds of disabled, for whom Maurice had so far not had time to do anything.

The first evening we were in Bizerta, we were invited to dinner by the Colonel in charge of Caserne Lambert, a Serb, stout, complacent, unimaginative and rather Germanic-looking. He was completely indifferent to the misery of his disabled men, but he appreciated Maurice's work because it made army discipline easier when the men were occupied. He was a soldier with no time for sentiment or philanthropic frills; in any case the Serbs have a primitive, peasant impatience with disease and suffering—the natural attitude of a healthy, virile people. "These men are not in the firing line—they are very well off," the Colonel remarked. Those who recovered went to the Salonika front, and the Colonel, who was quite satisfied with his comfortable base job, felt that that was much worse than Bizerta.

The next day we met Capitaine Hautfort—one of the few Bizerta French who felt sympathy with the Serbs. He described to us the horrors of their arrival, nearly two years earlier. They were all survivors from the Albanian retreat. They did not look like human beings, their privations and sufferings had been so terrible. Many of them were still half mad with starvation, and hundreds had died soon after landing. More might have been saved if they had not been given heavy food by well-meaning people. Of those who did not die straight away, many only made partial recoveries. They were tossed from one French hospital

to another. In some they had been well treated, in others neglected. Most of them were not interesting to doctors, who had their hands, in any case, full with Senegalese, Zouaves, Arabs, Berbers: the off-scouring of the French army. A stream of similar cases were coming in from Salonika all the time. Their nurses were always men orderlies in Bizerta, as French women there did not think it proper to go into hospitals—" cela fera un scandale," they said. In Tunis and Algeria women were not so retrograde, and even preferred Serbs as patients to their own countrymen: they were so uncomplaining and grateful.

A few days after this we were shown over the hospital for nerve cases at Sidi Abdullah on the lake of Bizerta by Dr. Hesnard, the specialist in charge. He had just published a book on the nervous diseases of the war. He had been a naval doctor and had something of the seaman look about him still; he was wirey, straight and tall, and had that very clean clean-shaven look of naval officers.

To his patients he was charming—talking to them gently and smiling on them with his eyes all the time. There was a Berber who had lost the power of speech. When Dr. Hesnard asked him a question he made terrific efforts to answer him, but struck him all the time with his fist. He could not make a sound unless he did this. He was decorated for bravery and struck the Admiral while attempting to thank him. It was a disease that only attacked primitive races, Dr. Hesnard said.

" Before the War we used to fire off guns on Christmas Day when the celebrations began," a bright-eyed Serbian boy remarked to us. (He was paralysed as the result of fever.) " But now none of us will ever fire off guns for pleasure again. We could not bear the sound of it, God knows. Perhaps after fifty years there will be people who can bear it."

The men in Dr. Hesnard's " Service " were the exceptions. They got thorough treatment, had massage, hot baths and physiotherapy, and the wards were clean and comfortable. We had come to the conclusion that we must start a Home for the nerve cases in Lambert and Nador and all the similar places in Africa where they were mixed with the rest of the army. Dr. Hesnard was enthusiastic at the idea and promised to give his advice and help. He had no room for any more at Sidi Abdullah. The trouble was where in this overcrowded world could we find a building to put them into?

II. BOGOSAV YORDANOVITCH

The Home was obviously the only proper way to tackle the problem of the nerve cases, but in the meantime we had to do something for them. Caserne Lambert at first overwhelmed me with shyness, but after all I had elected to be an angel to these people, and there was no going back on it. I went about the rooms trailing rafia, both natural-coloured and dyed, and started the men on making baskets. It was much easier than I expected. The men took to the work eagerly, and soon they far surpassed me and were freaking the sides of their baskets with vivid Serbian patterns. I could speak their language easily now and enjoyed talking to them.

One of those I got on with best was Bogosav Yordanovitch. His legs were paralysed and he was always in bed. He was in a long room at the Caserne, with thirty-four others, all given up as incurable. His hair and beard were dark and he had an air of dignity and refinement. Many Serbs are fair and few have beards: they are a handsome race, usually with clear-cut features, fine eyes and teeth and bushy hair, but few look as sensitive as Bogosav did—he might have been a Greek bishop. The other men called him Tchitcha (grandfather) though he was only forty-nine, but that in their eyes was old age. There was something boyish about him, though he was so dignified and he had a child's unselfconscious gestures. He was very artistic, but baskets were too rough for him—he preferred to carve the handles of wooden spoons or to embroider muslin with silks and gold and silver thread.

Bogosav told me that he had a daughter in Serbia and that I was, though not the living image of her, still rather like her. "When I saw you coming into the room I thought for a moment that you were she: but it is the same for all of us Serbs—God has left us alone. They are with the Bulgarians, my wife, my daughter and my little son, and God knows what has happened to them. I told them to stay there in the village where we had always lived, and not to flee as so many were doing. Perhaps I did wrong. The Bulgars are barbarians: they will not allow any letters to pass. I have never had word from them since the Bulgars came. I sometimes think," he added, "that for us Serbs it would have been better if we had never been born." The man in the next bed heard what he was saying and said in an eager voice, as though the idea had just occurred to him, "and that is

true, God knows, though better still to have fallen in the Turkish War of 1912."

I asked Bogosav what was the matter with him and he said: "I fought through the Turkish War. That was a noble fight, for it is fitting to shed blood for the Holy Cross—to avenge every man his fathers. And we freed the Southern land from the Turk, glory be to Jesus Christ." He crossed himself. "But when this war came I was too tired for it and yet I had to bear all that our young soldiers bear. We fought for a year—we drove back the Schwaber (the Austrians), we delivered Belgrade from their hands. Then the Bulgarians came in our flank and our rear, hundreds of thousands of them, and we had to flee. They told us we must get to the sea and the English and the French would save us. But between us and the sea were the mountains of Albania. You do not know those mountains, Sestro—no one who has not seen them can imagine them. They are naked, jagged rocks that go right up and pierce the sky. Through them there is a narrow track only broad enough for a mule—no ox cart can go there. And the dead lay all along the path—women and children as well as men. If a man slipped he fell down the rocks into the torrent below and was dashed to pieces. Winter came upon us as we went—blizzards hid the path from sight. At night we lay in the snow without even a blanket to cover us. And we were hungry. A ration of bread had to last us three days, and beside that we had only a little uncooked maize like chickens eat. The Albanians shot at us from their mountains and made us pay fifty dinars for a loaf that in Serbia would have cost one. Happiest were those who lay down to sleep in the snow and never woke, for in the day the rocks were so steep that scarcely could we climb them. God was angry with us Serbs for our deadly sins." (I am translating literally from Bogosav's words.) "In the world there has yet never been neither who has seen such sights as we saw there, nor was tormented with such torments. At the end we had grown so changed that a man could not recognise his brother: nay, had my mother been there she would not have known her son. What Christ suffered when they nailed him to the Cross, we suffered in Albania.

"When we came to the sea, some waded out into it and were drowned, for in Serbia they knew only shallow rivers and lakes. And there was still no food. Only when we got to Corfu we were fed and could rest a little while, though many died there. Every day they rowed out the little boats, piled up with corpses and

they cast them overboard without a prayer for the earth to cover them. But I grew so strong that they sent me back to Salonika. I fought in the trenches there till the marsh fever took me. I was never wounded—only tired."

Bogosav was a great reader. When I lent him a little book published by the printing press he was quite moved. It had in it extracts from the old Serb ballads and information of all kinds. He had a great thirst for information and asked me questions every time I went to see him. Was it true that there were factories in England, were there any peasants there, and what was the price of wool? When I had answered these questions he said politely, "and your King George—what a wonderful man! Your King Lloyd George I should say. I have read his speeches. He says the whole front should be one front—not west and east but all one. He says had you English and French fought with us on the Danube, then Serbia would have been saved and the Schwaber defeated. But Serbia is a little country and we could not stand alone. I think," he added, "that your King Lloyd George is like our King Stefan Dushan—glory to his name. Stefan Dushan lived a long while ago, and he told us Slavs that we must all be one, and he made Serbia great and powerful. But after his death we forgot his saying and we became divided and the Turks conquered us at Kossovo on the Field of Blackbirds."

To change the subject I asked him to tell me about his life before the war.

"There is no land like our land," he said, his eyes shining. "There you have all that heart desires, for the earth is very rich and every man is his own lord and no one works for another. It is not so in all countries. My village is not far from Rumania and there I have often heard live landless men, who labour all their lives for their masters and have only maize porridge to eat. For long we lived together on our estate in one big family we called the Zadruga—parents and brothers and sisters with their wives and children. But later my father gave me a house of my own and much land. We had oxen, cows, pigs and sheep, and four hundred fowls. We had pasture land and vineyard, maize, wheat and hemp, and much orchard of plum trees. And we had silk worms and my wife wove sashes and kerchiefs of silk for feast days. I never beat my wife. I honoured her, for true it is, as they say, that a house is not built on earth but on a woman. She had great skill—people came from far to see the tapestries she wove. She had names for all the patterns—'the tortoise,' 'the

frog ' and ' bees round their hives ' are ones I remember. Our land was so rich we often had two harvests of hay and corn : and I was highly esteemed in my village. Once the Mayor sent me a long journey to buy a bell for the village church."

Bogosav had seen nothing of Africa except the walls of the barracks, but he imagined it a sad country for he heard that the Arabs pulled along little wooden ploughs, scraping the earth as with a small tooth, and that the women wore heavy veils and never saw the white world.

One day I found Bogosav reading a Serbian Bible which someone had found for him. He turned to me with great earnestness. " In the old days," he said, " God used to come very near. He walked about amongst the people—there were some who heard Him speak. But now He has gone—far away." He looked at me with searching eyes, but I could give no explanation. " Some people say there is no God," he went on, lowering his voice, " but once I saw not God, but Christ. It was in a dream. There was a bird with wings of fire, flying backwards and forwards and a sound of guns and everyone was rushing here and there, and then suddenly there was a light and a man stood by me and the cannon ceased and the bird of fire flew away, and I knew that the man was Christ and that the War will be over one day and our land freed."

Bogosav, buoyed by his dream, was one of the few Serbs who believed this, yet even his hopes were sometimes poisoned. He explained it to me in this way. " There is no drink of honey unmixed with gall, and my heart is often heavy. How can I explain it? Our land will be delivered, but what of me? I have become a foolish old man and very weak. I was strong when I left my home and handsome and revered of all men. What will my wife say when they carry me to her door? Will she recognise me? Will she not rather say—' who is this stranger you are bringing me? This is not my husband. Take him away—a wife is not deceived. You have brought an animal, a monkey, to me—not the father of my children.' "

I told Bogosav then that we were going to make a Home where he would grow strong and handsome again and he laughed, not believing this, but ashamed of his outburst. " Kako reshi Bog (it is as God ordains)," he said in a non-committal voice.

III. THE AUTHORITIES IN TUNISIA

We had many strings to pull before we could establish this Home. There were long reports to be sent to the London office,

We reckoned that we would need £1,000 to equip it and £1,200 to run it for a year. The food and service would, of course, be given by the Serb army, but there was equipment, amenities and the staff to be covered. London voted the money in January, 1918, and promised us more staff. They had already sent us two more young women: Miss Hill, who had learned how to make splints and came with her whole equipment, and Miss Brown whom we christened "Brankitsa" because she had the Slav cast of features and the Serbs adopted her at once. She was a masseuse and treated the more hopeful cases. We were very pleased with our two latest acquisitions. They helped us, not only with the work, but with our social life which had become rather strenuous. We had, for instance, decided a month after our arrival that we would have a quiet little exhibition of the work of the disabled men, and a day before its opening had received a message from Amiral Guépratte, in charge of the port of Bizerta, that we must put it off a week as he wanted the Resident-General of Tunisia to be present at it. When the day came it turned into a brilliant function. The place was packed with generals, commanders and captains of the army and navy, as well as all that Bizerta could muster of fashion and distinction. Amiral Guépratte capered about much in his element, for he loved functions and was a good friend, both to the Serbs and the English. The exhibits were impressive for the Serbs are remarkable craftsmen. Soon after, my brother and I were invited to lunch with the Amiral and to dine at the Residence in Tunis. I was indifferent to these honours for I had no worldly sense, but I was kept up to scratch by Magavee: it was important for our work, I must take these occasions seriously and behave properly. For my brother she had no fear—he was always gay and natural: he won everybody by his spontaneity and goodness.

It was just as well that we were on good terms with the potentates of Tunisia for we depended on them for our building. Fortunately Maurice's prestige was considerable. Soon after our arrival the Serbs had given him a decoration and made the occasion an impressive ceremony. It took place in the courtyard of Caserne Lambert in the presence of Amiral Guépratte and his staff, the officers of the Serb G.H.Q. and the disabled. The military band played patriotic airs. Colonel Michel made a speech in French and Serb. He said that it was to show his special care and admiration of his heroes, the disabled men, that the Regent Alexander was decorating their friend Maurice Wilson.

Then he pinned the order on to his coat, and the Serbs shouted Zhiveo (long life to him) three times, and the Amiral congratulated him with eighteenth-century courtesy and pomp. I felt a little nervous and thought that Maurice, standing all by himself, looked like St. Sebastian awaiting the arrow of martyrdom, but Magavee whispered in my ear—" this is invaluable for our work. You will see. The presence of Amiral Guépratte gives it the finishing touch."

We had some interesting wild-goose chases for our building. We looked over an Arab palace by the sea near Tunis. It had a garden full of orange trees and a tiled patio with slender pillars like a Gothic cloister, but with more colour and more delicate proportions. But it belonged to the Bey and he saw no reason to give it up to Christian dogs of Serbs and English.

On one of these expeditions I had my first sight of the desert. I had expected it to be monotonous, but I was amazed by its colour and variety. The sand was a light gold and it wasn't flat because there were hills of sand, with—for it was late afternoon—long deep shadows. Far off near the horizon there was a rim of blue—it was difficult to believe that it was not the sea. Here and there oases made pools. When the sun set the dunes turned purple. The air was so light that one felt an inexplicable gaiety. It was so empty and silent that it seemed as though one had strayed outside the world of living things. It was like what Doughty had said of Arabia : " Hither lies no way from the city of the world, a thousand years pass as one daylight." Even the villages seemed only like the desert piled up. The houses had no chimneys or windows and inside there were mats and a few pots—no furniture. I could understand that the Arab peoples who inhabited this solitude had found their tyrant deities and fussy superstitions like " irritations on the one infinite mind " and had come to believe in one God, without mediator, priesthood or sacrament. I remembered the passage from the Koran—" Thou canst not see any disharmony in the creation of the Merciful. Look again—canst thou see a flaw ? Gaze again and again. Thy sight shall return to thee dimmed and dazzled."

The British Consul, Terence Bourke, also tried to help us to find a building. Mr. Bourke was a character, and—unusual in our diplomatic service—he had an intimate knowledge of the people in whose land he worked. He was the son of the Earl of Mayo who had been Viceroy of India and assassinated in 1872. He spoke Arabic and studied its literature and art. He was held

in great esteem by the native population, who believed that one so wise and good must be a follower of the Prophet: it was only because of his official position that he kept this secret. His name opened all doors in Tunisia. Using that magic my brother had seen the Assawaias (or Isa Weir)—a fanatical Moslem sect, dancing in the Mosque of Menz-el-Djemil, on the Bizerta lake. The Arabs of Menz-el-Djemil had for years brought their disputes to Mr. Bourke to settle, so they allowed him to bring his friends to their mosque, though this was closed to all other non-Moslems. For an hour the drums beat while the Arabs swayed and chanted in rhythm to them—then two sprang from their ranks into the circle and, throwing away their upper garments, stabbed their stomachs, arms and cheeks with knives, without drawing blood. But Maurice said the scene did not give the impression of frenzy or demoniac possession. Their gestures were poetic, their dancing as skilful and controlled as the dancing of Spaniards (who perhaps learned it from them)—it was as though they had a deep understanding of the human frame and could afford to play on its intricacies.

Mr. Bourke was growing old—he had had a stroke which affected the left side of his face and made his left eye leaky. Torpedoings—which took place almost daily outside Bizerta in 1917—caused such an enormous increase in work that his office was often thrown into confusion. At one time it was rare to pass the Consulate without seeing groups of half-naked sailors or coolies blocking its entrance. Once two thousand natives from Assam were brought into the harbour in tugs. Most of them were naked except for a piece of string and a flap and an occasional umbrella. They were being taken to France for work behind the lines. They were easy to handle—their philosophy did not admit the accidental: they were calm and dignified in foul weather as in fair, naked or clothed. Maurice helped Mr. Bourke whenever he was free, in the evenings or the hot summer afternoons when everyone else was having their siesta. He believed that Northerners could stand the heat better than natives, but he over-did it and contracted the disease of which he died a few years later. Maurice was the kindest man I have ever known. He never lost the sort of sensitive consideration and concern for other people which children—especially boys—often have but usually lose at puberty.

The English Naval Commander had a worrying time too, but that was no business of ours. He complained bitterly of French

red tape and said that we had lost many ships because the rescuing had to be done through the French and they would not speed up their methods. The Italians got black marks too. They kept their ships safe in harbour and expected us to do all their transport for them. Convoys came into Bizerta very frequently and spent the night in the Lake. The English Commander gave them their further orders, planning out their route to Alexandria, Gibraltar or Salonika. I once saw a secret map he had in his office. On this were pinned little flags showing where the enemy submarines were on that particular day, according to the information of our intelligence service.

IV. THE SERB PROFESSOR

I was too much involved in learning to understand the Serbs—their language, their poetry, their history, themselves—to pay much attention to our Arab background: besides I always feel ashamed at regarding human beings and human cultures as mere decoration and I had no time to study Arabic. I was exchanging lessons with Drago, who had formerly been classical professor at Belgrade University. He was at this time a captain in the army and had been sent to Bizerta by the Ministry of War to edit the Serbian daily paper *Napred*, and manage the printing press. It was he who compiled the folk stories, ballads, legends, ABC's and translations from world literature that gave so much pleasure to the disabled men.

Drago was considered rather a joke by his fellow officers. He was extremely learned, very absent-minded, and lived in a world of his own. I think they thought of him as old, but he was only thirty-six—a big-framed man with a fine mop of stiff, wavy, black hair, red cheeks, and very white teeth: not our idea of an effete professor. Some said that he had had a tragic love affair and had tried to commit suicide. Whether as a result of that or of the wars, he suffered from agoraphobia and did not dare to cross the open squares and spaces of Bizerta by himself. Whenever he went out he always had an orderly with him—an old man of sixty, and they looked an odd couple as they passed abstractedly and apprehensively through the bustling town.

Besides his love of the classics, he had an intense interest in the past of his own country and collected Serbian legends and folk-lore. I thought that he would enjoy his Bizerta job of publishing these, but he shook his head grimly—he hated the whole thing: above all *Napred*. " It is a dark spot in my life, this sheet," he

said sadly. (His English was very queer: he translated from a mixture of French, German and Serb when he talked to me.) " Assuredly I will go in the hell for its cause. But what will you ? I am oblidgéd. You do not know our Serbian discipline. It is the greatest discipline in the world next to the Prussian." When I pressed him on the matter he said that he had not only to write lies about politics and lies about the War, but see that all the miserable activities in Bizerta, that despicable mongrel port—were recorded—fun fairs, military reviews, marriages and deaths, even amateur concerts where corpulent French bourgeoises, masquerading as a chorus of elves, sang for the Red Cross.

" And what do you really like doing ? " I asked. " I like fighting," he replied simply. " Not in this War—in the last, in the Turkish War of 1912. I was Captain of Infantry. Ah ! that was a villégiature, how you call it ? A picnic, a fantaisie. We went from victory to victory. In three weeks the Turks had all run away. All the same, there were bad moments. Once we were surrounded but we hackéd our way through. For me it was the first time to see a dead man." " And I have never seen a dead man yet," I intercepted. " Then it is you alone left in the world who can still be Pontifex Maximus," he said solemnly. " For he, you know, must touch no corpse. But let me tell you. It was a big, moony night. I was at the head of my company and we advanced to a hill. It was horrible. The corpses were piled up like ramparts. We were in a delicate position—we had not known the enemy was so near. Part of my company ran away—indeed a great quantity." " And did you run ? " I asked. " What, I beg ? " he said politely. " Did you run ? " I repeated. " No," he replied, " no—I was on the point, but I stayed. That is the reason of this,"—he pointed to the loops on his breast. " And that ? " I asked, pointing to two other loops. " That too for being brave. It is the best medal, the Karageorge. It is very beautiful. Here I cannot wear it. Here I am an ambusqué. I was happier a thousand times at the front. But the Minister of War says it is need for me to stay here, so I stay. I am oblidgéd but I am very unhappy. It is not only the lies for the sheet. I am writing the legends of the Serbian peoples and I have no books." " And what about that large library I saw at your printing press yesterday ? " I inquired. " A few—yes, it is true—I have a very few. I went on foot through l'Albanie that I might save these books. I was ill with typhus, but at least I had all the books the mule could take. But they are nothing. I would give a year

of my life," he broke out violently, " for the book of Serbian proverbs I have left in Belgrade." " And when you go back, if the Schwaber have not left your library what will you do ? " " God knows," he replied solemnly, " but I have not much fear. Every day I pray to St. George and Christos and the good God as well as to the Blesséd Mother. Why have they preserved me until now if they will not preserve my books ? You see I am a fetishist. It is need. There is no other way for me. It is from the experience. You will laugh at me perhaps but it must be. St. George, he is my guard, the saint of my slava : the Blesséd Mother has heard my many prayers, and in the battle God has been my refuge. With the metaphysic I can demolish them in an hour, but with the experience they are my preservers, my shield and my sword. You have seen the icon of my saint above my bed ? The lamp below it is burning always." " Does it really help ? " I asked. " Vous croyez que j'ai un dieu tout à fait domestique ! " he exclaimed, and smiled so much that his eyes disappeared.

" If you like occultism I could tell you some strange things," he said on another occasion. " You know that a dream that you have in a new place has the chance to become true. I had many occasions in the Albanian retreat to try this—each night it was somewhere new that I slept. One night my aunt spoke with me and said I must assist at her next slava." (He often translated from French when he spoke English.) " Now my aunt was dead since some months, and knowing this I was not pleased to be asked to her next slava which was in the spring. ' I cannot come to this next,' I replied, ' for I am too occupied, but I will come quite soon—perhaps to the one after.' " " But you didn't keep the appointment," I said, " and all you are doing is to disprove an old superstition." " You have right," he said, " but the war is not yet over and perhaps there is still time. And sometimes indeed I regret the appointment of my aunt—when I am writing lies for my newspaper, for example. But it is need that I tell you a dream that did realise itself. It was also on the retreat. I dreamed that I saw a great quantity of graves. There was writing on the graves, but I could not read it, only on one. The letters were red, and the name was the name of my sergeant-major, Dragomir Lukitch." " And was he killed ? " " Oh yes, he was killed," he reassured me. " He was killed three days after. He was a good soldier, but red letters mean that the death will be very soon. And in one way his death was of great interest to me.

It furnished me the proof of a very ancient superstition, and it will appear in the commentary of my book on the Serbian religion. Not because of the dream: no, another thing more important. Next his heart he was wearing a bat's wing. In the mediæval time a bat's wing was a very strong love charm. It could gain a love and also keep it." "It is useful to know of it," I remarked. "For you it is not need," he replied with a little bow, "but for me indeed. Ah, that indeed." "You are very gallant," I said, replying to his bow. "Oh yes, it is true," and again his smile made his eyes disappear. "A chevalier—that indeed!—but is it Cœur de Lion, or is it only Don Quichotte?"

Yet though he was quixotic and chivalrous, he found it hard to understand how we could give our time and hearts and interest to work for disabled and shell-shocked Serbs. "These men they are rabble," he said. "In the army they were heroes. But here they are ambusqués, malingerers, deserters. They are tremblers because they do not want to go back to the front. You are like the Sisterhood of St. Clare. What sacrifice, what devotion! C'est quelque chose pour moi trop sublime."

When he had gone I thought over his "trop sublime" indictment. What was it that had driven us out of our homes to do relief work for refugees and disabled men? Motives are so complex. How can one explain to Serbs the love of excitement and adventure, the itch to meddle in other people's affairs, the nostalgia for foreign countries and for increased scope for one's powers, which drive the British abroad, to administer either their own Empire or a small slice of somebody else's? These motives do not sound very sublime, but once on the job other emotions quite often come into play—compassion, perhaps, or desire to help, affection for the people helped, or if it is merely ambition to do a piece of work properly, there is still some merit.

V. BEN NÉGRO

In the end it was Amiral Guépratte who solved our building problem. He gave us fourteen military huts at Ben Négro. The Home at Ben Négro was from the start a cheerful place. There were flowers in its garden and many olives and eucalyptus trees. The spring in North Africa is over like a puff, but during its brief moment it is of startling brilliance, and it was in the spring that we began to get Ben Négro ready. The meadows round us were suddenly full of the flowers that only grow with us in gardens—crimson gladioli, purple Japanese irises, Madonna lilies and

scarlet anemones, and there was a blue flower that spread like a sulphurous flame over the sand dunes near the sea, but I never found out its name. There were birds, too, that I had never seen before—goldfinches and jays and golden orioles, and the chasseur d'Afrique who transfixes insects on to cactus thorns until it wants to eat them. If we climbed for five minutes above the huts we could sit in the ruins of a Roman fort and have a view over the Bizerta lake to the mountains behind it, which in the spring are ultramarine as they are in the Highlands. Between the fort and the lake, the land undulates gently down, rich with blossoming orchard, ploughed field and green-grey olives. White clouds sail lazily overhead and are reflected in the lake. At night the crickets and cicadas start their screwing whistle, the frogs croak harshly, and the aloes and cactus turn silver in the moonlight to remind one that it is Africa—but in the daytime it might be some gracious landscape in France.

The first thing our nerve cases had to do when they came to Ben Négro was to improve the place—as we had only tackled rudiments. They enjoyed this, for after Lambert and Nador the Home was so friendly, informal and free that it won their hearts and they wanted it to be beautiful. Tremblers strung together pieces of bamboo and beads to make curtains to keep away the flies, paralytics plaited palm mats to make shady arbours for our meals, epileptics worked in the garden and blind men made straw hats for them, while the lame made shelves and chests in the carpentry workshop, so that everything could be kept tidy. My greatest success was in persuading a funny little tailor, whose only form of locomotion was a convulsive run, that he could manage a sewing machine. After that he spent all day at it, and made curtains and bed covers. Later on, when we had done all we could for Ben Négro, we set up proper workshops like those at Lambert, only much more free and easy, though they soon had their own laws and traditions. I was amazed how industries sprang into life and formed themselves into something like the mediæval guilds, with masters and journeymen and apprentices. The crafts side of Ben Négro was my department, but all I remember doing was look on. Some tanned leather and made beautiful native waistcoats with appliquéd patterns, others wove carpets or made the characteristic Serbian leather sandals that have turned-up ends like the prows of boats, or adapted them with heels for sale to French ladies, others had taught themselves how to make Spanish espadrilles with string soles and canvas tops, or

Arab olive-presses; a one-armed man made toys, others made olive wood into boxes and polished them till they shone like marble. There was brush making and net making for the less skilful, and those who had still to lie most of the day did bead work or embroidery or made baskets—none of them was idle. As we always had over a hundred men I was kept busy supplying them with tools and materials and arranging for the sale of the goods, but the magic really was to have stumbled on a nation of craftsmen—or perhaps one should say on a people who had not had their pleasure and pride in making things destroyed by machinery. We had meals out of doors. In the evening the men often sang minor-keyed airs of their country that sound sad but that make people happy to sing. An old man who looked after our donkey had made himself a flute out of a reed, and at dusk he piped tunes on it. It made me think of what some Serbs who had been captured by the Byzantines in the sixth century had said of themselves—"we are Slavs," they said, "from the far-off sea. We graze our herds, make music with our pipes and do no harm to anyone."

We had many visitors to our Home at Ben Négro. Early in 1918 a contingent of British soldiers had come to Bizerta, in charge of captive balloons fixed to ships, the latest device for the detection of submarines. These, in the clear Mediterranean waters, are more easily seen than elsewhere (and in those days their speed was much less great than now). Once this balloon contingent spent the afternoon at Ben Négro, but all I remember of the occasion was being overcome with shame when they sang—quite consciously jangled, out of tune and harsh, as though they were proud of it. The Serbs listened, puzzled and polite, as one might to Chinese music or something you know that you don't understand. Then they sang their own moving folk songs—in parts, in perfect harmony. Which was the superior culture, I wondered?

But the visit that pleased me most was from my friend Drago, the Professor of Classics. I found him standing by Luka, an old soldier paralysed down one side, who looked after our fowls. He was watching him with a look of eager intensity. "At last," I thought, "he feels we are doing something worth while. Scratch a Serb and you find a peasant. This he thinks is really constructive work—animals, gardening, back to the land." Luka was putting eggs under a broody hen. "At last I have it," said the Professor, turning to me with an ecstatic look, "the little thing in the chain—how you call it—the link? You see this old imbecile

W M W   Γ M W   BOGOSAV   BRANKITSA

Ben Négro, 1918 :

Disabled Serbs making opankas.
Paralysed Serbs in one of the huts

Ben Négro, 1918 :

Making leather waistcoats.
Serbs in bed at bead work and embroidery.

Luka, foolish though he be, he works by tradition : he put nine eggs under this hen, he not would put eight nor ten. It is the uneven numbers that have the chance, that bring the luck. So the Third Heaven of St. Paul and the Seventh Heaven of Mohammed and of the Talmud, and a Fifth, I found in an old Slav proverb. So you will have a good crop of little hens with your Luka's nine ex. There are Nine Muses too." "And there is the Holy Trinity," I said, entering into the spirit of the hunt, and liking to be helpful. "Yes, indeed," he said reverently, "the Holy Trinity as well."

Other visitors appreciated the remedial side of Ben Négro more than Drago did. Dr. Hesnard was enthusiastic and saw great improvements in the men in his later visits. Lady Grogan wrote from London that she felt that the place was particularly interesting as an experiment—she thought that there was nothing quite like it in England : not that same combination of Home and treatment and workshop. The men did receive whatever treatment our trained nurse could give them. She had been in hospitals in Serbia, Russia and Rumania in the war and had a good way with simple peasant people, and we had now another masseuse besides Brankitsa. They worked away at dropped wrists, stiff fingers or arms that were beginning to wither for want of exercise, and had considerable success—though all these wounds and disablements had been neglected far too long. But the personal attention and massage gave a great boost to morale, and the men made much greater effort to use their stiff limbs because interest was taken in them. They taught the Serbs to massage too and found them very apt pupils. The men were given baths and made to do exercises with parallel bars. Miss Hill had seven of the disabled in a workshop, making limb supports out of leather and metal. A barber with a dropped wrist was able to start work again with the contraption they produced for him. Very soon Bogosav was hobbling about on sticks—and the same happened to most of the other paralytics. We felt that the experiment would be much easier in England where men would be living on their own soil with their families not far away, whereas we had a collection of farmers and shepherds who had been wrenched from their hillsides and fields to live in an exile they thought would never end, most of them without news of their wives and children. But they had more fatalism than our people—bred in them perhaps by their long subjection to the Turk—and more pleasure in making things. Perhaps we had the easier problem.

VI. THE CAMP AT NADOR

Soon after I arrived in Bizerta I started workshops for the disabled at the camp of Nador. For more than a year I used to drive up there three times a week in a coricola (Arab horse and trap). Magavee had thought of doing this, but she had started the re-education of the blind. She had scoured North Africa and eventually collected all the Serbs, blinded in the war, at Lambert. She had helped Sir Arthur Pearson to start his blind school in London in 1914, and he sent out braille typewriters and equipment. In our sort of work people were always turning up unexpectedly, and one day a Serb named Ramadanovitch came to Magavee and said that he had learned braille in Prag. She put him in charge of her Blind School. This was later transferred to Yugoslavia, complete with Ramadanovitch, and was the first and only institute of the kind in the country. Magavee had also helped in collecting all the nerve cases of North Africa for Ben Négro. She was a born organiser and wanted problems to be, not just tinkered at, but tackled as a whole.

The Camp at Nador was very dreary. As well as the active Yugoslav army in training, there were hundreds of disabled and sick men. Some of these were highly skilled and they did excellent work. There were 6,000 men up at Nador, and it speaks well for Serbs that I could go in and out of the camp without embarrassment. It is true I had a protector. The doctor at Nador was an enlightened man and he always accompanied me and helped with the workshops, believing in their therapeutic value. This doctor was very different from the other Serbs I knew. He was from Croatia—not a Croat but a descendant of the Serbs who, led by the Patriarch Arsenius, had, at the invitation of the Habsburg Emperor, crossed the Danube in the seventeenth century to escape from Turkish tyranny. He had studied medicine in Innsbruck and done his military service in Budapest. At the beginning of the war he had been attached to a hospital at the Austrian front in Bosnia and had deserted to the Serbs. They thought highly of him, but the French suspected him because he had once been in the Austrian army. They wounded him deeply by inviting him to return to Austria from Bizerta. He scarcely ever came down into Bizerta and lived like a prisoner at the camp He was a brilliant surgeon, but his men were past the reach of operations. He was very lonely and my visits meant a lot to him, and they came to mean a great deal to me.

He suffered acutely at the camp because the commanding officers there were of the crudest type. At the front they had been heroes, but this was the rear: they were coarse and corrupt and out for themselves. At the front they had been friends of their men, calling them by their Christian names and drinking wine with them when off duty, but here they bullied them. The doctor was the only man of superior rank who was kind to them. He was completely single-minded and honest, and he had a large-hearted charity. Here, I thought, is what Serbs may become with education. Yet he had lost something that they have—buoyancy, belief in themselves and their destiny: a belief that smashes all before it. In society he was courtly, gracious, humorous, but in private he showed his sensitiveness and pessimism. He had very expressive grey eyes. I remember their amused benevolence, but also their sudden wounded-animal look of pain. He told me he was afraid his relatives and friends must be suffering terrible persecution for their pro-Serb sympathies. He had no hope of ever seeing them again. He did not talk about it, but I knew that he was pessimistic about the outcome of the war. The Austrian army was riddled with disaffection, but the Hungarians were good fighters, and he felt, I knew, that the German military machine was invincible.

"The Hungarians were becoming more and more oppressive in the years preceding the war," he said to me. "They forced us to speak their language, the most difficult one in Europe. If we didn't, we couldn't buy a ticket on the railway. They changed all the names of our towns and villages, which had had Slav names for centuries. How could a poor Croat peasant woman who wanted to sell her eggs in the market forty miles from her home remember the new name of the place? 'If you can't speak Hungarian, stay at home,' the man in the booking office would shout at her. And they tried to drive a wedge between us Serbs and our Croat neighbours. There is a difference, of course. We are Orthodox, they are Catholic—but that doesn't matter now as it used to in the Middle Ages. We speak the same language, and we were getting over our feuds, for we can only be strong if we are united. You have never heard of the famous Agram trials? How little you English know about European politics! They accused Serbs of making a conspiracy against the monarchy. The whole thing was an invention, but the point of it was that they bribed Croats to bear false witness against Serbs, so as to make enmity between us. The old *divide et impera* of the Habsburgs."

The dreary Nador camp had a brighter side to it, not only because of this friendship. The Yugoslav officers often gave a special dinner in our honour. There was an excellent gipsy orchestra—poor gipsies, they once said to me " we have no king and no country, why should we fight ? " but there were many in the army. They played and we danced. There was always roast sucking pig on these occasions, and delicious tarts, and plenty of wine, and people got merry, though never too merry, for the Serbs had a strong sense of the respect due to English-women.

The soldiers also had their entertainment. They had made a huge open-air theatre in the side of the hill. I watched plays there, and saw three thousand men listening entranced to a hastily improvised comic sketch or a serious recitation. Once I saw a soldier giving a monologue of his own composition on the Retreat, carving chunks off a loaf and munching them unconcernedly as he recited. Also a satire about the Allies who were always expected and finally met—in Corfu.

Many of the young soldiers in the Nador camp were threatened with tuberculosis. Maurice had always been worried about them. He had set on foot a scheme for placing men on the land, both in Algeria and Tunisia. One hundred and forty-three had left Nador for work of this sort. We sometimes visited those who were on farms near Bizerta. The French were full of praise of them, they were excellent workers. Maurice was troubled about those in Algeria, a country of vast estates and selfish landlords who exploited their men. Algeria seemed to him worse in this respect than Tunisia where farms were smaller. But many of the men were too weak for land work, and the doctor was more concerned about them than about the disabled because they were the hope of Serbia and could still be saved. We concocted a plan of arranging special huts for them with verandahs where they could have open-air treatment as well as a special diet. In September, 1918, I went home on leave and put this scheme before the London Committee. They adopted it enthusiastically, and I returned to Bizerta hoping to carry it out. I was to live at Nador to do the administrative side of it, and the doctor was to be in charge of the treatment. Unfortunately I was much delayed in the south of France as the mail boat from Toulon had been torpedoed. I waited at Bormes la Mimosa behind Hyères, a mountain village, fragrant with lavender and pines, from which you can see the Mediterranean sweeping into the land in deep blue bays, gulf after gulf to half-guessed horizons. But all that loveliness was

swamped for me by feelings of frustration and impatience. I arrived back in Bizerta on the morning of November 11th to be caught up in the news of peace. The joy of that was overshadowed for me two days later—my friend the Nador doctor was ordered to leave at once for Salonika. The plans for the tubercular Serbs were shattered, although it was probable that they would still have to spend months in Africa.

After this came a very difficult time. The Serbs, when their first ecstasy about the freeing of their country was over, became extremely excitable, impatient and hard to handle. The men at Ben Négro, Lambert and Nador all struck work. They were afraid if they carried on normally we would keep them in Africa. The idea spread round among the men that we were making a good thing out of them. I believe that in their hearts they knew that this wasn't so, but they had to find a reason for their agitation and misery. The real cause of their anguish was that they did not know what they would find at home, if their families would be alive or dead, and how they would restart life. As we were all of us working for bare maintenance, with or without a little pocket money, this notion that we were coining money was rather wounding. The workshops themselves were run at a loss, though we sold what we could in Tunisia and at a Serbian shop in London which my sister was running. Their aim was educational and therapeutic—they would become self-supporting if they continued long enough: it was not unsatisfactory. . . . The men calmed down after a while and started to work again as they wanted to earn as many francs as possible to buy presents to take home; for at Ben Négro we paid everybody—apprentices as well as masters. But they were never as friendly as they had been before.

With the Armistice I lost another friend as Drago was ordered off to Salonika. I had to look about for another Serbian teacher. I found Stefanovitch to brighten the last trying weeks in Bizerta.

VII. TALKS WITH A COMITADJI

Stefanovitch, though over forty, gave the impression of youth. He was tall, slender and wiry. He had dark hair, fine black eyes, and a look of suspended energy. I liked his looks, but when he came to the lesson with a large grammar and started off by telling me that he was a particularly good choice for me as he had been a schoolmaster for more than twenty years, I felt dashed. All I wanted was conversation: I hadn't bargained for a pedagogue,

but I didn't want to be ungrateful or rude as, of course, there was no question of paying him. I asked him rather hastily what he thought of the Peace and that started him off. After that there was no more fear of grammar. "Peace," he echoed, turning to me with the swift, sharp movement that was characteristic of him. "Peace—I don't believe in it. I have been at war for eighteen years and I can't believe in it." "Eighteen years?" I thought I had misheard him. "Yes," he replied, "eighteen years. That is hard for you, an Englishwoman, to understand, with your old culture and your stable life. But we have a culture too, only we have had to fight for it. I will explain—I see you understand our language well.

"I was born in Macedonia—a Serb, but a Turkish subject. When I was a boy I wore a fez—the sign of bondage. I was not allowed to call myself a Serb—but I was a Christian, not a Moslem: we were permitted to practise our faith. We went to the village church, and there every Sunday and feast day we prayed for freedom: I will repeat you our prayer—'Lord, set an end to the punishment of the sons of Lazar, the martyr of Kossova. Lord, grant us our place in the midst of the nations and deliver us from the Turk.' All around us the peoples were free. The Greeks had thrown out the Turk (ah, your wonderful Byron, Gospodjitze), our Motherland Serbia too—she was the first—even Bulgaria had been liberated by the Russians: why must we in Macedonia continue alone in Turkish chains?" "Disraeli," I murmured, "Peace with Honour," but he did not notice.

"I went to a Turkish school—my parents could neither read nor write but they wanted me to be educated. At school we were allowed to have lessons in Serbian grammar, but the Turk inspectors did not know what went on in those lessons—what appeals to our patriotism, what stories of our past. The Turkish censor was so ignorant that he took out the name of Pushkin from a reading book because it is like the Serbian word for gun, and he had never heard of the great Russian poet. The Ottoman Empire was dying. A fish starts stinking from its head, and the Sultan Abdul could not keep order in his own household. But oh, the misery of our country! The taxes and exactions of the Turks were more than the land could bear. Every male Christian had to pay a poll tax, there was an education tax and road tax, though there were no Serbian schools and the roads were like ploughed fields. These taxes were farmed to the highest bidder. But that was not the worst. We were the poor rayahs, the

Christian subjects of the Turk. The agas, our landlords, took half of our produce, half of our flocks and herds. We could not gather our harvest until they staked their claims. I have seen my father scorch the roots of his peach trees because the aga had claimed more peaches than they would bear. We had to labour on their fields like slaves in the harvest time, hew their wood and lend them our oxen for haulage. And worse things happened—not in our family, God forbid. The beys and agas were all-powerful. When they stayed in the peasant houses they dishonoured the women. It was not enough to take our hospitality—we refuse that to nobody—but they wanted our sisters and our wives too. It was the custom in our country for the women to go about looking pregnant, so that the Turks should not desire them. There were no doctors in our country—only wise women—and no hospitals. When a plague broke out, thousands died—there was no help, no medicines, no remedy. The Turks took everything from our country and put nothing into it.

"But it is all in our ballads, Gospodjitze, our wonderful ballads: we are great poets, we Serbs. I will say to you part of a ballad and you will see. It was written in 1804 at the time of the Karageorge rising against the Turks. There had been signs in the sky: the moon was eclipsed, it had thundered on St. Sava's day, and lightning had flashed on the day of Holy Chains, in mid-winter, mark you, and the sun was darkened on St. Typhon's day in the spring, and bloody standards had passed over Serbia in the clear sky. The Turks were afraid, and they summoned their wise men to interpret the signs from their holy books, and their wise men said this, shedding bitter tears" (he began to recite, and it was something like this):—

"Brother Turks, thus the holy books say: when such signs were seen over Serbia in the clear sky it was just five hundred years ago; then the Serbian Empire fell, and we then conquered the Empire and killed two Christian emperors, Constantine in the heart of Constantinople, beside the cold water of Sharatz, and Lazar on the plain of Kossova. For Lazar, Milosh killed our Sultan Murad, but Milosh did not kill him outright: Murad remained alive till we made the Serbian Empire ours. Then he called to him his viziers. 'Turkish brothers, noble viziers! I am dying, yours is the Empire. But take heed to what I say that the Empire may long be yours. Do not be bitter masters to the rayah but be very good to them. Let your head tax be fifteen dinars, or let it be even thirty, but do not load on them

fines and contributions, do not load misery on the rayah, do not touch their churches, nor their laws, nor the things they respect. Do not wreak vengeance on the rayah, because Milosh has killed me; that is the fate of war; you cannot gain the Empire, sitting, smoking on soft cushions; do not drive the rayah into the forests for fear of you, but tend well the rayah like sons and then the Empire will long be yours. If you heed not my words but work tyranny on the rayah, then you will lose the Empire.' The Sultan died and we did not heed him, but we set up a great tyranny. Now these signs have appeared, now the Empire will be lost. Fear not any King—a King will not attack a Sultan, neither can a kingdom attack an empire, for God has so ordered the world. But beware of the poor rayah: when the picks and hoes rise up the Turks will suffer in the land of the Medes, and their ladies will lament in Shama for the rayah will make them shed tears. Turkish brothers, thus say our holy books: that our houses will burn, grass will grow on their hearths and spiders will cover the minarets for there will be no one to chant the prayers; wherever we have made roads and pavements, wherever the Turks have passed and their horses' hooves have scratched the soil, grass will grow from the nailprints and the roads will long for the Turks but no Turk will come. Thus say the holy books."

I had been brought up on Gladstone and I liked to hear Stefanovitch on the Turks. I could understand that he had felt like fighting them for eighteen years, but he surprised me when he suddenly went on:—" but we had a much worse enemy than the Turks—a thousand times worse: the Bulgars!" "The Bulgars," I said; "but I thought you Macedonians loved the Bulgars." "Ah no, Gospodjitze. I must explain things to you for I see that you have been suborned by the Bracha Buxton (the Buxton brothers): they have done us much harm. Out of ignorance, no doubt—they are good men maybe, but the Bulgars got hold of them. They are masters of propaganda and that is where we are weak. The Bulgars have no right to Macedonia—did not our glorious Stefan Dushan rule over it in the fourteenth century? Have we Macedonians not the *slava*, that most ancient Serbian custom, unknown to the Bulgars and the Greeks? I could prove it to you in a thousand ways, but the Bulgars were very cunning. About 1870, even before their own land was freed by the Russians, they sent down their missionaries into Macedonia—priests and schoolmasters: they built churches and schools and everywhere they went they taught the ignorant people to believe

that they were Bulgars and not Serbs. They were crafty and greedy—they knew the riches of the land, the hidden minerals of the mountains, the fruitful earth with its tobacco, its rice and vineyards, its treasures of architecture, the ancient churches and monasteries of Lake Ochrida which the early saints who brought to us the Christian faith had consecrated. Thieves, murderers, dogs, they stole away the hearts of our own people from us. And we were blind, we Serbs—at least our Government was blind. Again and again petitions were sent to Belgrade—we begged them to send us down missionaries to teach the people and they remained deaf.

" It was in 1900 that I began to teach in Macedonia. It is a noble calling, a teacher's." " Very noble," I assented. " But what a responsibility," he went on. " We had to counteract the Bulgars. We had to teach the children that they were Serbs—that their heroes were not only Marko Kralyevitch and Lazar, but Karageorge and Obrenovitch who had freed our land a hundred years before. And it was not enough to teach," he went on in a low voice, " we had to fight too. It was the Bulgars who began it. For years they carried on an organised brigandage and we did nothing to protect ourselves. We bore it longer than we should have done. They carried away our finest men into the mountains, and when they could not force them by torture to deny their race, they shot them down. One day they took a friend of mine—a teacher, very young, almost a boy. The Bulgarian soldier when he saw him was horrified at what he had to do. ' Just say you are a Bulgar and I will let you go,' he stammered. But the boy smiled scornfully. ' I cannot soil my lips with such a name,' he said. ' Then I shall have to kill you,' the soldier said, and timidly he stretched out his bayonet. ' What do you fear ? ' cried my friend, and rushing forward he impaled himself on it. Some months after one of their gang, an eye witness, described to me the scene and shuddered. We have a saying, ' Fear those who die joyfully,' and the Bulgar might well tremble at such heroic death.

" It was after the murder of my friend that my longing for vengeance became a passion. One day thirty of us met together in a house in a lonely place. The shutters were drawn and we had our watch outside the door. On the table there was a dish of wheat that had been blessed by the priest, a two-edged knife and firearms. We made the sign of the cross, kissed the knife and swore in the name of God and at the price of our possessions, our

relatives, our children and our lives, to live only for our nation and to take revenge on the Bulgars. From henceforward we swore that for every Serb that fell we should kill two Bulgarians." "Two," I exclaimed, "two eyes for an eye, two teeth for a tooth!" "Ah, Gospodjitze, I see that the poison of the Bracha Buxton has eaten deep into your soul. If not you would know that never yet was born a Bulgarian whose life was equal in value to a Serb's. Then we drew lots. There were thirty pieces of paper—twenty-eight were blank, but on two there were black crosses. The men who drew the crosses had to kill the Bulgars—one each. Every time a Serb fell we held our meetings, we drew lots, and we chose out those who were to die. We did not leave the choice to chance. That would have been as unjust as warfare is when the peasant dies because kings and lords are quarrelling. If the Bulgars killed our peasants we killed theirs; if they killed a priest, we chose out two of their priests; if officials or schoolmasters or merchants, then we also chose two of theirs. We were just. At the end of our meetings we ate of the consecrated wheat, that was our sacrament—we needed no wine: our wine was the blood of the Bulgars."

He paused, and I asked him politely what the name of his society was. "We were called comitadji," he replied, "because of our committee meetings. You too have committees, so I have heard, and we borrowed our name from you: it is not a pure Serbian word. But perhaps we ought to do a little grammar now." "No, I want to know how you got on. Were you ever in danger yourself?" "Yes," he said thoughtfully. "Yes—once in great danger. We were very successful—we killed a great number. Of course you must remember we were living side by side in the same villages. The Turkish police paid no attention—only if we failed to pay their taxes they had a little massacre: they cared about nothing else. Usually the killing was quite simple—only occasionally there were complications. One of our members was a bishop—a very great man. I too was prominent in the movement and important in the whole neighbourhood. They found me out—they never discovered about the bishop; we had no traitor in our Committee, at least I think not. One day a Bulgar to whom I had done a good turn came to me in secret and warned me that his people had marked me out for death. He advised me to flee. But a Serb does not flee. I had my work and I had my cause—a man does not flee from these. I sent my wife and children to the home of my father-in-law in the moun-

tains and awaited events. I was resolved that I should sell my life dear. I went about with the utmost caution. If there were a knock on my door I had my revolver ready. One day a Bulgar came up behind me when I was walking on a lonely road, but I was too quick for him—I knocked him senseless before he had time to draw his dagger. They tried to kill me three times.

"The next occasion our Committee met they all looked gravely at me. 'Anton,' they said to me, and their voices were so solemn that in spite of myself I was shaken. 'Anton—your days are numbered. You have escaped so far but you cannot escape for ever. Sooner or later they will have your life. We are your friends and we value you very highly. Fear nothing—your death will be revenged.' At the sound of the word revenge my heart was comforted again. Ah yes, Gospodjitze, revenge for one's friends is a sacred task, and I have seen many a man die in peace once he was sure that his friends would not forget their duty. They were good comrades and they went on to tell me that for me they would not be satisfied with the ordinary toll of two Bulgarian lives—no, for me three should fall, and those of my own choice. Believe me, I was touched by such a token of their love and esteem for me. I assured them of my unworthiness, but they insisted. Then I chose the three. All three were men of standing and importance—two were schoolmasters, that was only just, but one was a merchant and the richest man of the neighbourhood." He laughed gaily. "I was not modest—he was fat and well-clothed. It is always the rich that die hardest. It was a good choice." "But you are still alive?" "I will finish and you will see how it happened. After I had made my choice we all repeated the vow of our society, took the sacrament, crossed ourselves and stood silent a moment. Then one after the other each of them kissed me, as though I were already a corpse. It was only then that the idea struck one of us that perhaps it was not necessary that I should die. How would it be to warn the three Bulgars that if I were killed their lives were forfeit? We drew a skull and crossbones on three slips of paper, put them into three empty cartridge cases and threw them into the windows of the three men. You can guess what happened next. The two schoolmasters never moved, but the next day the rich merchant fell at my feet in tears, beseeching me to leave the neighbourhood. 'We have no longer two lives, thou and I,' he said, 'but have become as one soul.' 'God forbid that I should be of one soul with a Bulgarian,' I replied. 'If thou diest I must die,' he con-

tinued. ' For thee it is easy. Thou hast no wealth—but for me it is different. I am a man of much importance and great substance.' And here the old scroundrel took out his pouch and threw it at my feet. ' Napolye ! ' I shouted at him. ' Get out—swine of a Bulgar. Wert thou to pave the road from here to Constantinople with gold napoleons, all for me, I should not go. A Serb does not desert his post.' ' Ah God, that I should die for a Serb's foolish bigotry,' he said sobbing. I kicked him out of my house, but they are artful these rich men. He found a means to preserve his worthless life. With his gold napoleons he bribed the Bulgarian committee men and they spared his life by sparing mine."

Stefanovitch told me some other curious things in our last conversation lesson. He said that he had been several months in North Africa, and when I asked him how it was that I hadn't seen him, he looked mysterious and said that he had been living in an old Arab fort, imprisoned by the Serb military authorities. I asked him for what crime, and he said, " for no crime, Gospodjitze, I am a great patriot and a member of the Black Hand : a very good organisation. All the bad officers here, like that swine up at Nador who imprisons young lads if their buttons are not polished, are White Handers and against us. You know nothing of our politics, but perhaps you have heard of Colonel Dimitrievitch who was court-martialled and shot on the Salonika front. That was a crime if there was one in this war. He was our leader, and a greater hero and patriot we have not had in our lifetime. He was accused of making a conspiracy against the Regent Prince Alexander. That was a lie put about by his enemies. We are not against the young Prince, but we want him to be held in some check. He has learnt too much of the autocratic ways of the Tsars from his long years in Russia. Now that rule has ended and the Tsar and his family have paid the price. We do not yet know what will come out of the Revolution, but we know the oppression there was in the Tsarist days. Well, as I was saying, the Regent is an autocrat and young and headstrong. He refused to listen to the generals and the advice of the army—he insisted on taking command himself, and he threw away our best men in a desperate task : he insisted on their storming a hill on the Macedonian front and thousands perished. It was because we were critical of this action that Dimitrievitch was court-martialled and I was sent to prison."

Black Hand—it awoke a memory in my mind. I had heard that they had been implicated in the murder of Alexander and

his Queen in 1903. Then they had overthrown the Obrenovitches and restored the Karageorges, and now had become critical of their own creation. Hadn't they had something to do with Princips and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand at Sareyevo too? Stefanovitch's eyes looked bright and meaningful when I asked him this, but at this moment Dushan, our orderly, came into the room and he did not reply. (Dushan always found pretexts for coming in and out when Stefanovitch was with me.)

When Dushan went out Stefanovitch resumed in a low voice—"I must tell you, Gospodjitze Vilson, of a remarkable prophecy made by a simple peasant in Uzhitze in the middle of the nineteenth century. This man one day rushed through the village crying out—'they are killing the Prince, they are killing the Prince.' Everyone thought he was mad, but when a few days later they heard that on that very day the good Prince Michael had been murdered at Topchider they thought differently. Then everybody listened to him and he prophesied the future. He foretold everything just as it happened. He told of the assassination of Alexander Obrenovitch and of Draga—may the earth spew them up—in all its detail. Then he came to the Great War. 'In the latter days,' he said, 'a Power shall come from the North and another from the East, and they will join and our land shall be swamped as by a flood. And our people will flee, and so great will be their sufferings on that flight that the living will cry out to the dead "open your graves that we may come down and lie with you and be at peace." And Serbia shall be emptied of her manhood and at that time the women will come out from their houses and, shading their eyes with their hands, will look up and down the highroads in search of a man and they will not find one. And there will be weeping and wailing and desolation. But the end will come suddenly. Serbia will arise out of her tribulations and become greater than ever before, and her kingdom will stretch far beyond the river of the North. But her troubles will not be ended. Again there will be Haiduks and outlaws in her mountains. And the House of Karageorge will go the same way as the House of Obrenovitch.'"

"Oh dear," I said, "how sad. You are going to be a great country now—you will join together with your brothers the Croats and Slovenes and Macedonia will be free, but there will still be comitadji in your mountains, and there will still be violence and fury and hatred. I hope that the prophecy is not true. And the Regent Alexander—is to be murdered too?" Stefanovitch shook

his head and sighed—" I don't know, Gospodjitze," he whispered. " I don't know—God forbid." But his " God forbid " had not much conviction in it—he hadn't forgiven him for the death of his leader, I could see.

I knew nothing of the Regent myself at that time—but old King Peter was a picturesque figure not without a certain grandeur. He was said to have visited his country in disguise during the Obrenovitch rule and to have gone from village to village with a tame bear. He had shared the Retreat and fought with his men in the trenches, and Serbia seemed to have prospered during his rule until war came.

The prophecy depressed me, so I suggested we read a ballad for a change. Stefanovitch roused the pedagogue in himself and read the ballad of the building of Scutari to me, explaining words as he went. He was astonished that I did not understand the Serbian words for breast and suckle. " They are very important for you as a woman," he said earnestly. I looked up at him, startled, but he was detached, remote, completely matter of fact. " This man would kill you as soon as look at you if he considered it his duty," I thought, " but he thinks of women as his sisters."

VIII. END OF BIZERTA

Early in 1919 Colonel Michel evacuated Ben Négro and brought the men down to Caserne Lambert again. The break-up of our Home was sad, though most of the men were deceived into thinking that it meant an early transport back to Serbia—after all, as Luka said, they ought to be sowing their maize in a week or two's time and could not afford to dally in North Africa. Milosh, the most serious of our mental cases, was the last man to leave Ben Négro. He had loved wandering about where he liked there, and though he had had long spells when he refused to talk to anyone, he had always smiled in a meaningful way at us and been friendly. When the morning of departure came he would not get up. At last four men dragged him out and got him into the ambulance bare-footed and wild, but he waved everyone out of the way and jumped out. They let him alone for a while : in the end it took nine men to get hold of him, rope him to a mattress and carry him off. All the way down to Lambert he wailed and howled. Perhaps someone had to sing a dirge for Ben Négro, and we were too busy sweeping up. At last, the whole hundred and eighty were at the Caserne : we found it very hard to do anything much for them there.

In the end we were all anxious to leave Bizerta. Some of the men who had been in the advance through Serbia came back, wounded, with terrible tales—bridges broken down, roads impassable, homes looted of furniture and farms of their stock, orphans wandering about uncared for, shortage of every necessity of life, horrible atrocities against civilians. It sounded as though there were much more to do there than in North Africa.

Yet we had been happy in Bizerta. We had had ups and downs—external crises, when Colonel Michel had been restive because we were a civilian group with undefined status and disturbing to army discipline, and internal tensions when our numbers had leapt from five to ten and we had not all seen eye to eye. But the work had continuously grown and expanded : we had all felt that it was worth while, and our devotion to the people we were helping had increased all the time.

Of course, living in an armed camp, most of us women under thirty, life had not been without romantic intérludes, for we had felt it part of our duty to entertain a good deal. Yet such was the influence on us of Victorian breeding (we had all, after all, been born in the nineteenth century) that our love affairs were never discussed amongst us. We would have thought it vulgar to boast of whatever proposals, honourable or otherwise, we received. Brankitsa, the youngest, gayest of our community, with her pale, distinguished face, and the eager manner that concealed a determined character, had exchange lessons night after night with a handsome young lieutenant—a former law student—without any indiscreet tittle-tattle among the rest of us. My brother used to hover outside the room where these lessons took place, expressing disapproval of their undue length, but as he afterwards married Brankitsa, there may have been something already burgeoning in him, though he was unconscious of it at the time. He didn't seem to have the leisure or the plenitude of mind in Bizerta to fall in love. Magavee was the most deceptive of all of us to the Serb male. With her heavy dark hair and eyes, her serene and gentle manner, she was their idea of womanhood. They saw in her wifely submission and the mother of their children. True she was reserved and looked as unassailable as an abbess, but that did not deter them from sending their orderlies with little notes to her at breakfast time ; though they never risked anything but the most honourable proposals, and never forgot to mention their incomes and prospects. But I only found out about these notes by accident years after. Had they known

her as we did, they would have realised that their Florence Nightingale was not only a Lady with a Lamp, but had another side to her that would not have fitted in with their notions of womanhood—a genius for organisation and strength of character that fitted her rather for dictatorship than for subservience.

The Serbs were not as discreet as we were and annoyed me by imagining love affairs for us or spiteful feminine intrigues. I was being pressed to go for a holiday by my colleagues, for instance, not because I had malaria and it was very hot but because I was a rival who should be got out of the way. " How little do you understand the English," I protested priggishly—" we are above these female manœuvres." And looking back, I think I was right —odd though it is. But Anglo-Saxon women are capable of real friendship for one another, and the bond between us was strong in Bizerta.

CHAPTER 5

WITH SERBS IN SERBIA

I. JOURNEY TO BELGRADE

Magavee was the first to set out for Serbia. She wrote from Belgrade that she was starting soup kitchens and a clothing distribution; that it was a semi-sacked town, as the Austrians had carried away everything they could lay hands on before they had left. When we came we must be self-sufficing, she said. The great difficulty was labour—the soldiers refusing to work and the officers agreeing that they were too exhausted. "The beginning of Bolshevism," Colonel Michel muttered gloomily, when we read him the letter.

I followed Magavee at the beginning of February, on a small merchant ship that was taking oats for French cavalry horses in Dalmatia. There were a hundred soldiers in our transport, a colonel, his wife and two children, and a baby being carried to its grandmother by a Serb sergeant. There was no accommodation for passengers—we slept five in a cabin that was alive with bugs. The sea was rather rough and the Serbs seasick, but I comforted myself that it was more Odyssean for exiles to be returning to their country in a small craft. And indeed the voyage was cheerful on the whole. In intervals of calm the soldiers cooked themselves bits of food, romped with the baby, sand songs, and asked me politely what the weather was going to do: being English they thought I must be an authority on the sea, and considered it natural that I should not be sick. When at last we saw a splendid procession of ice mountains on the horizon I hoped that they were Greece, because I knew it would be wicked to admire Albania in the company of Serbs. When we approached the Dalmatian coast it looked so inhospitable that we thought Ragusa must be a myth, and indeed it is remarkable how it clings to the bare rocks and cliffs in an island of orange trees, palms and aloes. The little town was crowded when we arrived. There were French troops in charge of it, English and American sailors, Serbs *en route* for home from all quarters of Europe, Bulgar prisoners working drearily in the harbour, and Dalmatian soldiers still in their grey-green Austrian uniforms. But there was a feeling of life in the town, as though it were proud to be free again.

I was excited by all I saw and peered eagerly at everything: the narrow carts with open woodwork, painted with bright patterns like the toys our one-armed Obrad had made at Ben Négro; the richly ornamented Dalmatian costume which I had seen on the dolls the women had dressed in our Corsican weaving rooms; and everyone slipping about on *opankas*, the sandals I had thought of as too pretty to be useful, in spite of assurances.

The journey from Ragusa to Belgrade took five days. The first train we were in had carried thousands of Austrian troops throughout the war: the windows and doors were all broken; there was no light or heat; and as we climbed up the bladeless rocks of Herzegovina, away from the tempering breezes of the sea, a fierce wind blew through it. Luckily we stopped at all the stations, and the Serbs, some of whom had been demobilised and docked of their blankets by military red tape at the last moment, got out and danced their *kolos*. Often a peasant would turn up and play the national bagpipes, unheard in their exile—but it was *jaka zima, bogami* (string winter, my God). At Brod we changed, and I went out into the town and poked into little shops kept by Turks, and sat round fires the soldiers had made in the snow, while peasants in sheepskins told us of the misery of life under the Austrians. Brod is a railway junction and had been a military centre. They had been forced to sell them all their pigs and cattle and every bit of tin or lead they possessed, and had never dreamed that they would be freed. In the end there had been a glorious rout, and the Austrians had flung away their guns and abandoned their oxen and horses, and the children had plucked the pips from the officers' coats as souvenirs. There was a restaurant in the station where we could get something hot, but the Serbs were outraged by the high prices and blamed their Slav brothers for them, and there were mutterings of "Schwaber" and "Boches" and "Lickspittles of the Hapsburgs" which boded ill, I thought, for the new Yugoslavia. For these lands were all joined now with Serbia in a new and glorious freedom and unity, but how were the long-divided brothers, separated for hundreds of years, moulded by different histories and cultures—how were they going to get on together?

In the evening we got into large cattle-trucks to continue our journey. They were terribly cold, but at least one could stretch and walk about. I had brought a whole camping outfit, and I spread out my mattress, and there was straw to add a little heat. The men stole wood from train trucks and made a fire. The

smoke was bitter, and we had to open the door, but we had an illusion of warmth, and I made tea and shared out chocolate and sardines. A man who had been a prisoner in Russia sprang in from nowhere and told us his experiences, until a colonel, who was asleep in the corner, woke up and ordered him out. I thought him brutal, but later realised that he was very ill—indeed, this was his last military command: he died soon after his arrival in Belgrade, of penumonia, caught in the icy train from Ragusa to Brod. We arrived at Semlin in darkness. I thought of Casabianca-ing with the baggage—I had brought an immense amount of stuff with me because of Magavee's accounts of the nakedness of Belgrade. (I hadn't brought a pail, and every now and again during that ten days' journey I reflected that life without a pail would be difficult.) While I was wondering what to do, someone came along and said that the Danube was freezing, and that this night's ferry might be the last for several days. (The bridge had, of course, been destroyed.) I put some Bizerta soldiers in charge of my stuff and wormed my way on to the boat.

Belgrade, buried in snow, loomed up on the farther shore. I did not know where Magavee was, and I asked about hotels. The Serbs were too patriotic to say that none was functioning, but their non-committal answers were discouraging. But at this moment a little gnome of a man with a pointed beard stepped forward. He was thin and wizened with care and underfeeding, but I could see from his civilian dress and his neat appearance that he was a *tchinovnik*—a civil servant. He told me that his name was Danilo, that he was coming back to his home after four years' exile, that he had a great respect for the English, whose work for Serbs he had seen in Corsica, and that he would like to take me to sleep with his *punitza*. I did not know what a *punitza* was—it sounded to me rather like the *stenitza* (vermin) we had had in the ship—but I was cold and tired, hungry and homeless, and I told Danilo I would love to sleep with his *punitza*. We arrived at the quay and then stumbled along dark, snowy streets. I carried my bag and his, for he had a heavy box with the collections of four years inside it. At last we came to a door—Danilo opened it, and I saw a narrow alley with some tumbledown houses on each side of it. Danilo struck a match and we went up an outside staircase and along a verandah. He said with some pride that these had once been Turkish houses. He tapped at a door, and a voice from inside asked nervously, "who is there?" "A friend," my guide replied firmly. "But what friend—who?" the voice was

frightened still. "A friend, don't you know me, Danilo?" "But what—not my Danilo?" The voice ended on a scream: the door opened and a little old woman came out and fell on Danilo's neck. This was the *punitza*, and she was, I discovered, the mother of Danilo's wife.

She had been in bed when we arrived to save light and wood, but she was fully dressed, and she soon lit a fire for us and cooked a meal—macaroni, fried pork and tea (perhaps Serbia was not starving, I thought hopefully). And all the while she was chattering away, telling her son-in-law about the years of the occupation. "It was all tears," she ended. "And we never thought that they would go—never, never." Then she showed me a photo of an officer with an embroidered towel round it to keep it sacred. "It is my son," she said. "He was the first to enter Belgrade." Then Danilo told her how her daughter had been ailing ever since Albania, but that Zorka, her grandchild, was now a handsome girl of fifteen and could speak French. He had come to Belgrade in advance to prepare the home for his family. The *punitza* told him that his house was bare—the Schwaber had not left a stick behind and had burnt all his books. He told her manfully not to bother with such details when they had a guest to entertain, and she prepared a couch for me, loading it with warm Pirot rugs, and I lay down on it gratefully and fell asleep.

The next day I wandered about Belgrade until I saw a Serb I had known in Bizerta, and he told me where Magavee was. I found her in a pleasant flat with lots of furniture in it—for everyone had lent her things—and several pails. I went round Belgrade with her next day and watched her, patiently distributing clothes, while ragged mobs howled round her like wild wolves. The dispensing of soup to haggard little gutter-snipes looked peaceful in contrast. Magavee was happy with immense jobs on hand, but I found the poverty of the city discouraging, and was glad to hear that they were short-handed at Nish, the S.R.F. headquarters in Serbia. We had decided before I left Bizerta that Maurice should bring all the workshop equipment to Belgrade when it was time to close down Lambert, ready to start a Home for the re-education of the disabled there: if not for our men who, we knew, were all longing to get back to their homes, then for others. I wanted to help in this; I felt it was more constructive than dispensing temporary doles, but in the meantime decided to go to Nish, hoping that they would send me out to a village. Magavee had already been pulling strings for the

workshops, and had had interviews with ministers of Reconstruction, Agriculture and Education, and I knew she would have everything taped when the materials arrived.

II. NISH

It took us four days to get from Belgrade to Nish. This was normally a journey of some dozen hours, but bridges had been dynamited, tunnels blocked, and the railway, we were told, would not be functioning for six months. I went with two English doctors, and we travelled in an army lorry, which stuck at intervals and had to be hauled out by oxen. The roads were in an appalling state—rivers of mud from melting snows with holes two feet deep: but there were no craters from bombs, for most of Serbia had not been fought over. Road mending had been neglected during the occupation, and roads knocked to pieces by army lorries. Wherever we came, the peasants gave us hospitality, and everywhere we heard the same story—life had been a kind of extinction: no books, these were burnt or pulped down, almost no schools, looms requisitioned, nothing to sew, no medicines or doctors, no light in the houses, no news of the outside world. The part of Serbia we passed through—rich, well-wooded, friendly country—had been occupied by the Austrians, and we heard little of atrocities: these, we were told, had been worst in the zones where the Bulgars had ruled. Actually the Germans from the Reich had behaved best of all—paying for what they took, and even protecting the peasants from the savagery of the Bulgars. Everywhere we went we heard of the awful epidemic of typhus, which had reached its climax in 1915 but had broken out here and there ever since. It did not make me feel friendly to the louse I picked up in the last cottage we stayed at.

The S.R.F. was running the hospital for civilians in Nish and had a big work on hand. The hospital had two hundred beds, and treated hundreds of out-patients every day. Besides this, they had opened several dispensaries in the outlying villages and had an orphanage in Nish. The main work of the S.R.F. had from the start been medical, and it is amazing how much this voluntary society had been able to accomplish. It had sent five fully equipped hospital units to Serbia during the first year of war. In one of these alone, the British Farmers' Fever Unit, sent out in April, 1915, to fight typhus, there was a staff of forty-one, of whom five were doctors and thirteen fully trained fever nurses. It is remarkable that doctors and nurses were forth-

coming in those days in such numbers, but Serbia had sent out appeals to the world in her overwhelming plight, and it was natural to run to the help of the smallest and bravest of our Allies. France, America and Russia sent medical aid to her too. Most of the stores and equipment were lost when the retreat started in October, 1915, but the S.R.F. had opened hospitals, mainly for civilians, on the Salonika front, and had worked in Monastir when it was retaken by the Allies throughout the heavy bombardments.

When I arrived at the hospital in Nish on February 25th, 1919, I found many of the veterans from the first S.R.F. units still working there. My work had mostly been carried out in pleasant and often idyllic conditions, and I was struck by the bleakness and discomfort in which the forty odd British members of the hospital staff lived. It was clean but there was no common room, and no fire anywhere, although it was still very cold. I thought of the Corsican gendarme's " quelle noblesse, quel sacrifice ! " and of Drago's " c'est quelque chose pour moi trop sublime." Everything was given up to the patients—and indeed the staff had little time to think of their own comfort. Nish was the second largest town in Serbia—though it looked like a straggling village—and the centre of a huge district. There had been practically no medical aid during the three years of the occupation. There was a great deal to be done and no lack of what the doctors called " interesting cases."

I found Dot Newhall the friendliest and jolliest of the hospital staff. She was their sanitary inspector. She told me that the hospital was a paradise to what it had been when they arrived. It had been used by the Bulgars and the filth was indescribable. I came across her because of the scandal of my bug. I had had three sleepless nights—one with a louse, next with a mouse, which ran over my face, and the third, at the hospital, with a bug. When I found how deeply Dot Newhall took the bug to heart I protested that I had brought it with me—I hadn't realised what an insult and reproach a bug would be to a sanitary inspector in an English hospital.

After Dot had cleansed my room by burning sulphur in it, and going round all the crevices with a blow-pipe, we had tea together, and I asked her what had been the worst moments in her war experiences. She laughed gaily. " That is difficult to say," she said. " I was in the Retreat from Mons first. That wasn't exactly a picnic. Then I joined the S.R.F. and went out with Mrs. Stobart's Hospital Unit to Kraguyevatz. The peasants

came from a llaround and there was a lot of typhus, diphtheria and relapsing fever amongst them. After a bit I caught typhus. It was extremely painful. We were so short-handed that I kept on disinfecting the patients and doing all my ordinary duties when my temperature was 104. When I took to my bed I had horrible nightmares—I remember dogs tearing at my throat and my father looking on and not helping me—and frightful pains in my back and legs. They thought I was going to die, but I knew I wasn't. But I was starving and they wouldn't give me anything to eat, except slops. At last a Serb orderly brought me some beef and fried potatoes, and though I was so weak I could only eat it with my fingers, from that time on I got better. Still I don't think typhus was the worst moment. It was horrible when we got orders to retreat and had to leave our patients behind at Kraguyevatz. The Bulgars had started to bomb us, and Mrs. Stobart sent word to the British authorities but had a reply that it was true the Bulgars were marching into Serbia, but of course on our side!"

"And you were in the Albanian Retreat?" I asked, awed. "You bet I was," she said, "but Albania was only a little bit of it. We were retreating for six weeks. The mountain part of it was grim, but it was very beautiful—better than the Alps; there were gorgeous sunsets and ice-clear torrents in which I bathed and washed my clothes, and we made camp fires at night and sat round them singing carols, and the Serbs sang their songs, and once we caught a salmon and cooked it in a pail. Of course it was very horrible. There were corpses everywhere and we couldn't stop for the dying. We were on pack-horses and they kept slipping, and some of them fell over the precipices, and we had no corn or hay for them. We ate the dead horses and oxen—that's what kept us going—but often one felt sick and it was difficult to keep on, especially for the women who got giddy on heights. And my orderly was ill with typhoid. I had to walk by him and hold him on to his pony—I thought he would die. It was worse for others than for us. We were always hungry, but the soldiers were starving and the prisoners dying as they walked. Still, the mountains weren't the worst part. As far as Petch we had come in cars. It was a very wet autumn and the cars had to go through rivers, over rocks, boulders, broken country and fields. We were always having to pull them out of the mud with ropes and push them along when they got frozen, and if we rode in them we were beaten black and blue with the jolts. And then

we were always having to wait for each other. The Bulgars were only a few miles behind us and we did not want to be taken prisoner. If we slept out of doors we were frozen stiff, but indoors was worse—it was always with hundreds of other people, and the vermin and the stench of human filth were unbearable. The monks near Petch allowed us to sleep in their barns, and we took off our clothes and washed them for the first time in eleven days—but the monks were rather pained when we hung them out to dry in their close. I threw away all my luggage before the end. It made it easy with the Customs coming through Italy and France."

"Well," I said, "the Retreat must have been the worst moment really." "Oh no," she said brightly, "it wasn't. The Advance last October and November was much worse. You see, the Serbs went at such terrific speed, and they outran their provisions, and they dashed through rivers without fords or bridges. The Austrians drove up all the cattle because they thought they would get away in time, but they didn't, and everywhere the cattle were dying, and there were thousands and thousands of prisoners and they were dying too." "And did *you* have to go through the Advance too?" "Yes, I always had to go the first everywhere with my squad to clean up before the Unit came along. That had been my role all the time on the Salonika front. We had to rake and lime the ground before the tents could be put up, dig pits for the disposal of sewage and water, erect the cleansing station, the disinfector, the latrines and an incinerator. That was for our tented hospitals. We had two, at Sorovitch and at Kremyan. Where buildings had been used we had to get rid of the bugs and the rats. We had ten outposts with soup kitchens and relief centres and two hospitals at Monastir. And I had always to be going round them to see if the orderlies were keeping the sanitation in proper order. But the Advance was for me the most horrible experience because of the state everything was left in by the enemy. When we got to Nish I was told to clean up the High School for our S.R.F. hospital. The centre of the building looked like a sewage pit; after digging for some time in it we came on human heads and limbs and every kind of filth. Beneath this we discovered a beautiful marble hall and staircase. All the sewage tanks, which used to be emptied by the gipsies, had to be cleared by my men and myself, standing up to our armpits, wearing mackintosh trousers and wading boots. After this building was ready, a request came from the Serbian headquarters to let it

be used again as a school and go and do the same for the county hospital, the place you're in now. I saw the point. It was filthy too. My squad went on strike, but I talked to them for half an hour, and they went on again. They are wonderful really—the most splendid orderlies in the world, and the Bulgarian prisoners are just as good." "So you haven't got disillusioned like some people, with the Serbs?" I asked. "I? Never. I never forget that they might have given in in 1915—it would have been natural to do so, and quite honourable, but they preferred the torment of the Retreat and the dragging years of war on the Salonika front. Yet they are the most peaceable folk in the world—all they want is to be on their little farms with their pigs and their hens and their wives and children, and a bit of merry-making on saints' days and *slavas*."

III. GERDALITZA

I did some clothes' distributions in Nish and found the howling wolves there as alarming as in Belgrade. They were very ragged, but our Western garments were unsuitable for them, and being all of them different gave rise to much jealousy. I was pleased when the matron of the hospital told me that she wanted me to go down to Gerdalitza to relieve Miss Maw, the S.R.F. worker there.

Two Scottish women drove me down in a Fiat. The Scottish women had several hospital units in Serbia and were always very co-operative with the S.R.F. They whirled me through Leskovatz, a straggling town where there was a large Serb hospital which they described as a cemetery, and at last we came to Gerdalitza, a pretty little village in the Morava valley, where the mountains start after a wide plain.

Miss Maw was living in the cottage of Milka, a Bosnian woman whom she described as the soul of kindness. She herself was a slender woman with white hair, vivid smile, and a quaint, gay manner: I felt as though I had met her in some old-fashioned book. She was very run down, probably through living too long on bully beef and tinned foods, for there was nothing to be bought in the village except eggs and bread. She told me that her main job had been to look after transport. Gerdalitza was, pending the repair of the bridges, a railhead. The railway worked already from Salonika to Vranya, but not for the hundred kilometres between Vranya and Gerdalitza. (From us to Nish it worked again.) The transport over this gap was done by our British Army Service Corps lorries. My work would be to stop every

lorry coming north and, if it had S.R.F. stores, send them off to Nish by train—also to look after all nurses and relief workers on their way to or from Salonika. She had been extremely busy because she had arranged the transport of the thousands of refugees that got stranded in our bottleneck: had told the A.S.C. men whom to take first. Not that she had been appointed for this job, but in the way that happens in emergency work—people see a confusion which they can put straight and appoint themselves to do it. Now unfortunately a Serb interpreter had come to do the work; people complained that no one could get transport unless they bought his favour.

Soon after my arrival in Gerdalitza I had to go to the funeral of Sister Fraser at Predeyane, the next village to mine. She had been in charge of a dispensary there and had had hundreds of patients, for the S.R.F. sisters in these outlying places played the part of doctors. There was a large camp of Bulgar prisoners nearby. They were starving; many were dying of typhus. She had run a soup kitchen for them and nursed the sickest of them. Then she caught typhus herself. The S.R.F. doctor came from Nish to give her oxygen, but he had little hope for her. To recover from typhus, he said, one must have great stamina and will to live, and she was exhausted. The S.R.F. had lost a number of their staff in 1915, both doctors and nurses, through typhus on the top of overwork.

The funeral was a simple ceremony. It was a lovely day—full of the first breathing of spring. The peasants came with wreaths of anemones and asphodel, bunches of scylla, violets and grape-hyacinth and twigs of cypress. Four men carried the coffin up the hill and laid it in a hole that had already been dug, and the people threw in their offerings. Some of them threw apples and one a silver coin. Was the coin the fee for the ferryman, I wondered, and the apples so that she should not be hungry when she had crossed the river? The women said they did not know: it was the custom. The men chanted funeral hymns in Old Slavonic, and the women prayed that the earth might cover and lie closely round the foreign sestra, who had been their friend, for Serbs fear that the unburied rise again as vampires and suck the blood of their kinsfolk. This breath from the ancient world, the world of Homer as well as of the Byzantine Church, was somehow consoling. For thousands of years people had lived and died in the Morava valley, and all that time there had been no break in the ritual for the dead.

The graveyard was on the top of a green hill and looked down the narrow cleft which the river makes here in the mountains. People told me that Sister Fraser had no home and no family to grieve for her. It was not an unhappy way to die. We walked most of the way back to Gerdalitza (about eight miles) as our lorry stuck in the mud.

Lorries were sticking in the mud all the time and breaking their axles in the holes. I was sorry for the A.S.C. men who had to drive them. Many of them had not been home for three years, and they were bitter about being kept in the Balkans. They used to pinch the stores, sell the petrol and spare parts of their cars, and take bribes from the refugees whom they transported, but they were sometimes late with their rations, and they felt the relaxation of effort that the peace was to everyone. "These roads are being the ruin of us, Sister," they said to me, the inference being that they should be sent home to save their morals.

My time was mostly taken up with the foreign relief workers that hurtled either up or down Serbia. Nearly all of them got held up in Gerdalitza and wanted to be housed, fed and comforted. I had camp beds and blankets and put them up either in my room or in Milka's kitchen. I found the numbers of different missions rather bewildering. There were our own people, of the S.R.F., either returning home or going up to Nish, the Scottish Women, the American Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., two other brands of canteen workers, the Salvation Army and several others. There was an immense amount to be done in Serbia, but I could not help wondering if all this effort was being properly co-ordinated and directed, and if the authorities would not get rather harassed by seeing a new mission of mercy on their doorstep every day. It was not that too much help was sent to Serbia—but that at the beginning there was no one whose duty it was to find out what the problems were and to see that there was co-operation amongst the voluntary societies and no overlapping. Effort was wasted and talent left idle that might have been used. The S.R.F., concentrating mainly on medical work, was fully employed on the most urgent of Serbia's needs, but it had no jurisdiction over other societies.

My village was a microcosm of a larger world. There was great need of canteens in it, as at all railheads, but everyone wanted to rush to Belgrade and the bigger centres. I wrote in a letter home :—

"It is a funny fugitive population at this railhead. Everyone bears the stamp of war, war without gusto, heavy and sordid,

a continuation of what it has been here during all the occupation. The difficulty is to throw off the pall now that the enemy is no longer here. People suffer from nervelessness and lack of spirit. Everywhere you are hampered by the listlessness of officials, lack of organisation, half-hearted work. You walk down the road and find forty men driving stakes into the river, taking days where hours might do—yet on those stakes depends all the transport of Serbia. Until the bridges are mended famine prices and scarcity must continue. The refugees are in the worst case. For weeks they live at the station in cattle trucks, waiting for lorries which refuse to take them. There are among them Greeks, Macedonians, Turks, Rumanians, even Bulgars—all of them Serb subjects. Many were transported by the Bulgars—others fled when their homes became a battle-field. Now they are all wandering back again without any direction or plan. They oughtn't to have been allowed to move till the train was running. No one knows what they live on. Then there are the Serb soldiers, tramping up from Vranya, struggling home after years of absence. They are terribly loaded, not only with their kit, but with the treasures they have acquired abroad and are loth to throw away—soap, tobacco, sugar, cotton bobbins and all sorts. Their rations consist only of bread. They are very cheerful as a rule: they are going *kutchi* (home), they say. Alas, if I had only been here three months ago! Then I could have had, not only a kitchen for the refugees, but a canteen for these soldiers, and for our own A.S.C. men too. But a canteen needs more organisation and utensils than it is worth recommending, for the time Gerdalitza will continue to be the sort of Devil's Cauldron it is now. They say the bridges will be mended in a fortnight, and then Gerdalitza tumbles again into Arcadian peace—no refugees, no discharged soldiers, no British lorry drivers, no merchants, no caravans of ox waggons, no English sestra, no kaleidoscopic foreign missions hustling through—only the gipsies playing their trumpets and drums still, and the mayors and *tchinovniks* drinking at the kafana, while their *babas* (womenfolk) spin at home, and the boys and girls dance kolas on the green."

I see from my diary that I started a kitchen the day after I had written this letter. Macedonians were used to eating out of a cauldron and sharing their spoons, I discovered, so I seized some bags of rice and beans and some fat that were labelled " S.R.F.

Hospital, Nish," and an old Greek made a fire and cooked them in a large copper vessel he was taking home. Soon we were feeding a hundred every evening and everybody cheered up. It was just after I had started this that a young Greek officer made himself known to me. He had been sent on a Hellenic mission, he told me, to look after his compatriots. His business was to get them farther on their journey, and for this purpose he had already begun bribing or terrorising Albanians to give up their ox carts. I found it very agreeable to talk to him. I was impressed, not only by his perception and understanding, but by his humanity. He took the plight of the refugees to heart. The Serbs had supped so full of horrors that a little suffering more or less did not worry them—but he was not so hardened although he had been a volunteer in the Venizelos army since 1915 and had been at the front. He spoke French perfectly and seemed a very European figure in those mediæval surroundings. He came from Smyrna and always kept the key of his house in his pocket: one day, without warning, he would turn up there, he thought. Would his mother recognise him? She had been very beautiful—would her hair be white? When I went through the wrecked shell of Smyrna in 1929, I thought of this Greek and hoped that he had got back to his home before it had been burnt by Mustapha Kemal.

After he had come we got things into a much better state—two can often do much more than twice as much as one. By good chance the Serb interpreter was arrested, and I found myself in charge of all the transport, and was able to hurry off the women and children, and those who had been held up longest. I was shocked by people's attempts to bribe me for a place on the lorry, especially with sausage which I did not like. The Turks were the most dignified of the refugees—they never asked for anything: when I gave them food or put them on the lorries, they bowed as though they were pashas. They were good as under-dogs certainly, but they had left their mark on the wretched Macedonians, who fell at my feet and kissed my shoes, for centuries of slavery had robbed them of pride.

Milka told me many stories of the Bulgarian occupation. A soldier was killed in a village brawl and she was imprisoned as hostage. She didn't tell me why they had let her go. Probably because she was a handsome woman and had paid the price. She said the worst thing was hearing an old man shouting outside her window. They had tied him to a stake in the river, and for two days and nights she heard him crying "Gospodine! Gospo-

dine!" On the second night the cry grew fainter, and at last it stopped, and she knew that he was dead. Gospodine means Lord, and also master or sir. Was he crying to God for help, or to the Bulgar who had left him there to die? She told me of many other atrocities, but none of them affected me like the old man shouting "Gospodine!"

All Balkan races are cruel. They were trampled on for five hundred years, and cruelty breeds cruelty. I was glad to think that the Serbs had not been allowed by the Allies to march into Sofia and take their revenge. Serbs of Bizerta had expressed to me their indignation at this. It took away from them their joy in the Armistice. Yet the individual peasants did not feel revengeful. They were full of pity for the Bulgarian prisoners who passed through our village on their way to the Lescovatz hospital. Sometimes these men fell down in front of Milka's cottage. When I ran out and asked the peasants to lend their pots so that we could cook them rice, they did it with enthusiasm. This was the first time in my life I had seen people dying of starvation. Yet Serbia was not a famine area. There was not much to eat but no one needed to die of hunger. We were very near the Bulgarian frontier in the Morava valley. If they had taken away the barbed wire, the prisoners could have got home by themselves in a few hours. Yet they were kept in Serbia to spread typhus and die of hunger. The neglect of them was not intentional—but there was so much to think of in the immediate post-Armistice period, and communications of all kinds were difficult—no posts, no telephone or telegraph, and wireless, of course, not yet in use. I had received no letter since I had left Bizerta, read no newspaper. For me a two-month void seemed very long, but for the Serbs it had lasted more than three years, so it was nothing to fuss about.

All the time I was at Gerdalitza, peasants came to me to tell me of their ailments. I bound up their sores and gave them some simple remedies, but I was ashamed that I had no medical skill. I had tried to learn some rudiments of nursing beyond the trivial First Aid, but in the hospitals where I had helped in Gravesend at the beginning of the war, I had only been allowed to empty bed-pans, clean tins and make cocoa. The nursing profession is like a mediæval guild—afraid to impart its secrets, except to those who can give up four years to learning them. Some sick women walked for a day and a night over rough mountains because they heard that an English sestra was in Gerdalitza—it was dreadful to send them away.

At last the bridge was mended and I could pack up. I was sorry to leave Gerdalitza. It was the prettiest place I had seen in Serbia. I liked the glinting river and the square, white Serbian cottages with the chimney in the middle, like the houses children draw, and the patches of orchard round them, peaceful as convent courtyards, and the meadows with their white cyclamen and grape-hyacinths, and the hills, and the oxen ploughing and the peasants sowing. There were sheep and lambs too, for the women had somehow kept their farms going and hid away some stock and grain from the enemy. Pigs and chickens ran in and out of the cottages sharing the life of the inhabitants. I used to go to a village on the other side of the river. I heard singing in a house and the soft thud of a shuttle. I went in and found a woman weaving, her mother and three daughters spinning. They were singing the Emperor's Spinning Song. (Magavee found me the words of it when I told her of it later.)

> " In the evening the girls were spinning. Who has spun the most? Mother's Ruzha has spun the most. The praise of her reached the Emperor, the Emperor sent her a plait of flax. 'Here, Ruzha, is a plait of flax for you, spin me tents of it; what is left over, spin with it gifts for yourself. May you wear them out in my palace! May you sleep on my arm!'
>
> " Ruzha was cleverer than the Emperor; she sent the Emperor a shuttle. 'Here, Emperor, is a shuttle for you; make me a house of it; what is left over make yourself a palace with it. Then I will walk in it and sleep on your arm!' "

I was sorry to leave Milka—she had always been kind. The Greek had told me that she was famous in the village for her beauty and easy virtue, and I felt Miss Maw would have been distressed had she known, but we owed her a lot for her hospitality—she wouldn't take any payment, and she had often had to sit in her courtyard when the crowds of our suppliants were very large. She might be a Moll Flanders, but she had been very good to us.

When the time came to go it was difficult to get on to the train. There were people on the buffers and on the roofs and steps of the carriages and in the W.C.'s and in the luggage vans, but the Greek pulled me through a window and at last the train did get to Nish, though it was very slow and we had to stop for two hours to let the down-train pass. It was a single track railway up from Salonika. I could see that it was difficult for the French and English armies to get up to save Serbia when the Bulgars had attacked.

IV. BACK TO BELGRADE

The journey up to Belgrade was very complicated, because we decided to use the steamer up the Danube for part of the journey, and it was thirty-six hours late. We waited for it on a quayside, open to the sky, along with hundreds of soldiers and refugees. There was no drinking water there and the nearest village was two miles away. As we had been batting round the Balkans on our way up from Nish for several days already because our lorries had kept breaking down, we had used up our food. We went to the village and found something bright and yellow that looked like cake—it was maize bread, heavy and revolting: I preferred to starve. I was travelling with Evelina. Evelina was a personality. She was slender, dark and intense, and had a biting tongue. She spoke French exquisitely—she had been brought up in France and was like a Frenchwoman: she had the same personal attitude to everything, with violent likes and dislikes, the same dash of wit and brilliance. I admired her extremely—in any case there was a kind of loneliness and vulnerability about her that would have made it impossible for me to dislike her. But unfortunately she hated me. She had a fine scorn of people who, like me, had had soft jobs in soft places with Serbs in their exile. She had worked at Monastir all through the great bombardments—she was a front-line hero. I don't believe she had been through the Retreat—veterans of the Retreat were, with the exception of democratic Dot Newhall, so high up in the hierarchy of relief workers that I never dared to make a remark about Serbs in their presence, but I can remember talking to Evelina about them and being glad that she was still so fond of them. Some of the workers at Nish were already saying that they had had their bellyful of them. Serbs were better at being heroes than at being citizens, and they showed their worst sides in the chaos and demoralisation of the Peace. But Evelina had sacrificed so much for them that she had a stake in them, and she stuck to them.

I had nothing to do during the two days on the quayside, so I wrote up my diary. This is an extract:—

"I am sitting by the Danube at Prahovo. It is a lovely day —the river, the trees and flats, and the distant hills opposite, are so softly tinted that they seem unreal. This is soothing after a night in a smelly cattle truck with snoring refugees and processions of insects, phantom or real—a night which the Greek would have called 'un calvaire.' But one must pay something,

I suppose, for a morning opposite Rumania, and one doesn't pay in cash: in fact I have scarcely used money since I came to Serbia.

"And this is the Danube. What do I know of the Danube? It flows through emptiness in my mind—just as it does here through empty country. I have a few associations with it—all gloomy: of barbarians on its northern shore in Roman times, Goths crossing it in the Dark Ages, fleeing from Huns, French drowned in it after Blenheim, Napoleon a-straddle of it somewhere near Vienna. Has it its legends as the Rhine has, its pageant of historic circumstance as the Seine or Thames? I have no heritage in the Danube—scarcely a memory. Yet I watch it, fascinated. A river is inscrutable. The water that slides past me now, so smooth and so wide, has washed the quays and wharfs of two European capitals and of the Serbs' little Belgrade. And if it were at Budapest when the revolution broke out fourteen days ago, it shows no sign of it on its unruffled surface. It flows on—secret, incessant and inscrutable."

V. CLOTHES' DISTRIBUTION AND THE ZADRUGA

Soon after my arrival in Belgrade, six hundred of our Bizerta disabled turned up. We prepared a lodging for them, and were very happy to see them, but next day they had all vanished—had floated either up or down the Danube. The mayors were going to send ox-carts from their villages to bring them home, so we were told. Bogosav was not with them—the weaker men were being brought later. I was sad not to see him for I was much attached to him.

I got hold of some marquees and two Bulgarian prisoners and some Serbian teachers and started a kindergarten in Kalimegdan for a hundred odd children. They had cocoa and biscuits every morning, and I planned to open them all over the town but got diverted to other work. This was a legacy from Magavee. She had been doing clothes' distribution on a grand scale in remote parts of Serbia—but she had to return to England rather suddenly so left me to carry on.

These distributions were not like the chaotic affairs they had been at the start, when we had had all the discarded wardrobes of England and America to contend with, as well as hundreds of thousands of exquisite baby garments—in a land where there was scarcely a child under four years old. An immense consignment of government material had been diverted from Russia, its original

destination, and sent to Serbia. This was standardised material, brown cloth, calico and flannellette. The peasants could adapt it to their needs and make it up to fit in with their national costume. This was an enormous improvement, but still better would have been to have sent shiploads of raw wool and flax. This could have been rationed out to all and fairly distributed over the whole country, and would have given the women what they most longed for.

Magavee came back much elated from a distribution on the Zlatibor plateau near the Drina. Her interest in old French epic had now been diverted to Serb customs and legends and she had struck gold.

" I asked the headman of each village," she said to me, " to prepare lists of the families who should receive clothing, and to get volunteers to send their ox-waggons to the railhead to transport it to the villages or farmsteads. I had expected large families of ten or twelve members, even after the decimation of war, but in these lists there were eighty and ninety in one family, and some frail old grandmother would turn up with two ox-waggons to receive her dole. Of course I suspected the Zlatibor lists and I asked the headman of the district to let me investigate. He was delighted and told me I would see something unique. He took me along and soon I noticed log cottages with steep wooden roofs peeping out from a shower of plum blossom. This was one of the families of eighty—it was a *zadruga*. An old peasant came out of the largest of the cottages and received me with intense interest and pleasure; he was the head of the *zadruga* with absolute authority over all its members. I asked him how he got his headship. He told us that at the death of his father all the married members of the *zadruga* had elected him. Each of his brothers on marrying had built himself a tiny log cabin, close to the main house, where he lived with his family and his old mother. But they all had meals together and shared everything in common. He said that every man is trained from childhood for his special duty and keeps it for life; one brother had charge of the orchards, another of the cows, another of the ploughing and so on, so that each becomes an expert. But women's duties change weekly; bread making, weaving, looking after the small children, are too monotonous to be permanent occupations. The women were all under the old mother, who may have been about seventy-five but was full of vigour and with the eye of an eagle.

" A young soldier of this group, who had just been discharged and had been in France, spoke to me in French; it was obvious

that he was in some measure of disgrace. He explained that he wanted to break out of the *zadruga* and be given his share to set up a tailor's shop in the nearest town."

I asked Magavee if she thought that these *zadrugas* would last, or if they would break up with Western influence. "Well, I suppose," she said, "that they are too conservative. When young men want to adopt new methods and make improvements, it must be quite impossible for them—the *zadrugas* will never stand up to modern demands. But they have been a great experience in collective effort."

VI. AN ORPHAN HUNT

While I was away in the villages doing clothes' distribution, our plans for the disabled were maturing. A joint scheme was made with Dr. MacIlroy, at that time head of the Scottish Women in Serbia. The Scottish Women had sent out hospital units to France and Russia as well as to Serbia, and their achievement had been remarkable. The British authorities had refused their aid. There was considerable suspicion of professional women in the England of 1914—they were thought of as suffragettes, martyrs from Holloway, women masquerading as men. When Dr. Elsie Inglis had offered her services to the War Office the reply she got was "My good lady, go home and sit still." She returned to Edinburgh and initiated the movement which resulted in the Scottish Womens' Hospitals for Foreign Service. Other countries benefited from British conservatism.

Buildings were the great difficulty in Serbia, but a camping site was found fifteen miles south of Belgrade, near the hill of Avala, and Dr. MacIlroy decided to bring up the equipment of her tented hospital from Salonika, and make an orthopædic centre for disabled men there. She had had a workshop in Salonika, where Miss Hill, who had been with us in Bizerta, had directed the making of limb supports, and temporary legs and arms. There was a fine stretch of flat grassland where tents could be set up, and a valley near it where there had been a silver mine worked by the Austrians until the time of their retreat. The place was littered with half-destroyed machinery and plant, but luckily there were a number of wooden sheds, and even an unfinished house or two, where we could set up our workshops.

The Government lent the Scottish Women a hundred German prisoners, and they made the roads and set up the camp. Many of our master-craftsmen came back to us. Brankitsa bought a

whole farmyard of animals for flannellette and soap. Avala was ready for half the disabled of Serbia, but not many came. People won't always do things for their own good—many of the men had been away from home for seven years: they were too tired to bother about learning new trades or having limb supports. If they were lacking an arm or a foot, they felt they could grow a new one—nothing daunted their optimism. The Scottish Women opened dispensaries for the village folk. They also took in convalescents from a T.B. hospital they had in Belgrade. We decided to take in orphan boys and teach them trades along with the few disabled we had collected.

By the time the camp at Avala was in full swing, my brother had to go home. Before he left he made Brankitsa promise to return to England soon and marry him. Maurice was replaced by Major Howie, who for ten years had been in charge of a farm training centre in Nyasaland. He asked me if I would go orphan-hunting. I was delighted—I had come across hundreds of orphans while I was distributing clothes: every village was full of them. He suggested I might bring a dozen. "Why not fifty?" I asked. "All right, fifty," he agreed. In the end there were eighty.

The first place I went to was Grocka, some miles down the Danube. The member of Parliament for a nearby village was anxious to accompany me on my search. He was a tall, stout man, who looked rather unnatural in an ill-fitting pepper-and-salt suit and stiff white collar. He would have been more at home in the brown homespun of the peasant, I felt. But he was jovial and exuberant. Unfortunately he missed the boat, but as I had spent a week in Grocka on a clothes' distribution, I knew my way about. Grocka was the head of a srez or small department, and we had called in families from all the villages belonging to it, distributing free to 1,600 families, and selling (far below cost) to another 700. As the clothing was standardised, it was easily dealt with. The usual ration per family of six was: one pair of army boots, one blanket, one khaki overcoat, one short red soldier's coat dyed, one and a half yards of woollen cloth (double width), fifteen yards of flannellette, three shirts, three pants, two lbs. of soap, ten candles, one reel of cotton, and tape. The distribution had been orderly. The trouble had come—as with all these distributions—in the aftermath. I had gone some days earlier to Grocka to discuss with the mayor and the headmen of the villages the categories to be put on the lists—widows, orphans, disabled men, and people with less than a certain amount of land or stock.

The trouble was that the mayors could never resist the temptation of smuggling on to the lists some of their own friends and political supporters. As everybody needed clothing this favouritism awoke passionate rage in all those who got nothing.

The first person I saw in Grocka was the old schoolmarm who had helped me through the clothes' distribution. She jumped out on me, waving the broom with which she was cleaning her cottage. People still believed in witches in Serbia (they had never burned them as in other countries), and I wondered what they thought of her—especially as she was unmarried, a thing almost unknown. I often heard of witches, who did harm to their enemies by working on images they made of them in clay, but I wasn't able to pursue this train of thought for the schoolmarm was kissing me rapturously, and had evidently a great deal to tell me. " We have a new mayor now," she announced triumphantly, " it was we women who did it. The day after you left we took our picks and shovels and brickbats and surrounded his house. We shouted for hours, but he wouldn't come out—we would have torn him to pieces. But he has had to resign. Those radical friends of his—the richest men in the neighbourhood, carrying off all that good cloth which England sent for the poor : and the soap and the candles ! Long live the women of Serbia ! We put an end to the scandal—he daren't show himself now." She glowed with pleasure. I told her of my quest, and she took me to see the new mayor, the creation of the women of Grocka. He was a gentle blue-eyed peasant, with courteous, easy manners. He took me round to see the orphans of Grocka. I found four living with their uncle, who was doing what he could for them, but he had five children of his own and no wife, and the orphans looked tattered, underfed and dirty. I chose out the eldest of them, a fair-haired boy of twelve, dressed in something green that had once been a curtain. We found three others in a cottage. The eldest was a boy of fifteen—that meant a man in Serbia. He was working for a neighbour and supporting his two little sisters—this was a group that couldn't be touched. But there were some alone in the world, keeping goats or pigs for their food, learning nothing and belonging to no one : they were eager to come to our Colony, and the mayor promised to send them in an ox-cart.

The next day the Member of Parliament turned up. He had been delayed by important business. His home was in a village ten miles away. We drove over to it in a springless cart. Our driver was full of spirit, and we rattled from side to side, over a

road full of holes. The Member had put on a white waistcoat, and looked more than usually grand and unnatural. When we got to his village he took me to the *kafana* for lunch. He told the waiters to do their best for the foreign guest, but all they could manage was the usual Serbian *paprikash*, stew, rather greasy, and very hot with red pepper. I tried to eat with an appearance of appetite, but I felt that something was wrong : my host was not at his ease. Even the excellent local white wine did not help. I had expected to be taken to his home, knowing Serb hospitality, and I asked him how his wife was. " She's alive and healthy," he said grudgingly, " but she's growing old. What will you? She's growing old." I said that I wanted to meet her, and after the meal he gave in and took me to his house. A pretty brown-eyed woman came into the courtyard to greet us—it was not that she was growing old : she was still in the thirties, but she had a yellow handkerchief over her head and wore a wide homespun skirt and embroidered apron. She was a peasant.

He introduced me to her shamefacedly. " Une paysanne," he said. " What will you ? " she said sadly, catching his drift. I was surprised—I had met lawyers and generals, and heard of *voivodas* (field-marshals), who were extremely proud of their peasant origin and often put on homespun and *opankas* when they went home. In the evening he recovered his spirits. He invited the mayor and two other local officials to meet me, and we had supper under the trees : stewed chicken with rice and salad followed by clotted milk. There were signs of the Austrian occupation about the meal as no one had a knife except me, and that was the Member's pocket knife. My host explained my mission to the local dignitaries and told them to send runners over the whole countryside so that the orphans could be collected at the village hall for me to interview—he was an organiser, he said. He spoke to me in French before his compatriots, but every now and then there were asides in Serbian. " You can't judge by her exterior," he whispered ; " she looks simple enough, I grant you, but they are not God-knows-who, these Englishwomen. Who knows what luxury she is used to in her own country ? Who knows what grand house she lives in or how rich her parents are ? " There was a great muttering of " who knows ? Who knows ? " and " No, they're not God-knows-who," in reply.

During the meal I noticed a rough looking youth slouching about in the background. This was another sore point—the son of eighteen, a peasant, fit to dig and nothing else. He was about

to marry, his mother told me joyfully. " That shouldn't be," his father said desperately, lapsing into Serbian. " Of course I know it shouldn't be, and yet I am obliged to give in. What can I do? My wife is getting old: she has two other children at home. He is the biggest; he has a hearty appetite and she is tired of cooking and working for him. If he takes a wife now she will do all that for him—make his clothes, knit his socks, wash his linen, keep him fed and his house clean. It's practical, very practical and I can't oppose it. But it's a bad custom, a peasant custom. The French and English are wiser; they do not marry so young. But you are ripe races, while we, we are a green race still. We don't know. Here the peasant marries at fifteen, at sixteen, and has ten or twelve children. What will you? Experience doesn't teach them. If I had been here I would have sent my boy to the Grammar School. But I was away and he was here under the Austrians for four years; all he could do was to dig. I shall send my other boy to school—he will be a doctor, a lawyer, a great monsieur. But for this one it is too late. He is a peasant now and I can't save him. Let him be a peasant. Let him dig. Let him marry. Let him have ten children. I can't prevent it." He mopped his forehead. To fill the gap in the conversation I asked if I could see the bride-to-be. The Member looked surprised at the request and said that she was no particular one. There were several who would do. He and his wife hadn't made the choice yet—the marrying season was after the harvest, in two or three months' time.

It was growing late, the guests went home. The Member of Parliament again looked ill at ease. At last he burst out. He had wanted to put me up in his own home—but the Schwaber had taken away the carpets and—he had to confess it—there were fleas in the beds. He had asked a rich neighbour to put me up, did I mind? I told him I didn't, and he took me to a large farmhouse where a couch had been made up for me in the best sitting-room. There were lovely handwoven linen sheets on the bed and striped rugs made by my hostess, a bright-eyed peasant woman. She poured water over my hands out of a copper jug in the proper Serbian manner, and I went to bed.

The next day I found the village hall packed with orphans—all very ragged and with peaked eager faces. The Member and the mayor explained to them the glory of becoming master craftsmen. I wrote down thirty names and ran away quickly to prepare Avala to receive them.

VII. ORPHANS AT AVALA AND TOPCHIDER

Major Howie gave me complete charge of the orphan boys, and after my long spell with disabled men I found it a pleasure to be with children again. I wrote to my sister :—

" I wish the summer could last for ever. Our valley at Avala is an ideal place for the boys as long as one sunny day follows another. The boys sleep in marquees with the sides up, and their school and workshops are open pavilions. It is very healthy for them. It's true that most of them go sick, but scarcely ever for more than a day, and that happens usually with a change of food. They are not used to such good food as we give them here—cocoa in the morning with lots of milk and sugar, meat every day, butter quite frequently and sometimes fruit or eggs. A small boy wandered up to-day to see if I would take him. His father had fallen in the war, his mother, two sisters and a brother had died, all at one time, of typhus, and left him quite alone. This happened four years ago. Since that time he has drifted about from farm to farm, digging or keeping pigs for his bread. I burnt all the clothes he had on him. When new boys come, I go through a certain ritual with them. I bath them in disinfectant, and put them into new clothes, made in our workshops here. For many of them this is the first bath of their lives. When they emerge from it, they are so transformed it is difficult to believe that they are the same children. They wear shorts to their knees of good navy-blue stuff, and with their clean shirts and bare legs, they look very attractive. To begin with they walk about proud and awe-struck, as though they had been through a religious ceremony. But this soon wears off and, like most mothers of large families, I find it a great effort to keep my children clean and whole.

" Of course they do their own work—sew on their buttons, wash their shirts and pants, set their own meals and rinse out their bowls, and they do a lot for everyone in the camp as well. I was determined that Major Howie's prophecy that I would pamper them should not come true. They have half a day at a trade and half a day at school. The schoolmaster is an enthusiast for their education—few of them can read or write, but they are learning quickly—all except Pero the gipsy boy ; he finds letters much too fiddling and pernickety. He makes them as large as his sheet of paper, when he attempts them at all. Brankitsa has to-day bought a cow and a calf, and although

we are pleased with the prospect of extra milk for thin orphans, it was tactless of her to make the transaction in the middle of the week, just when I had got the orderly duties fixed up. I change these every Sunday, but after much thought I have put a quaint half-mad boy to look after the cow and its baby. He is blind in one eye and comes from somewhere in the middle of Serbia. He has no one but a sister and an aunt and has wandered up on his own. He agreed with alacrity, but made me promise first not to accuse him of drinking the milk, if the cow does not give to my expectations. We have one or two really clever boys, but they are terrible snobs. One we call the Eton boy told me that the peasants when they see lightning think that it is Elijah raining down fire, but that it is really only positive and negative electricity. The schoolmaster is preparing him for the secondary school and taking great pains with him, but I am afraid he will grow up an unconscionable prig. No one seems to sit on conceited boys in Serbia as we do in England—they are taken at their own valuation."

It was interesting living in Serbia—yet I was sometimes sad. An old gipsy woman told my fortune from a pack of cards, but all I remember her saying was, " why are there so many tears, my darling, so many black, black tears ? " Once I was crying when the orphans' schoolmaster was giving me a Serbian lesson. I told him I had a cold which made my eyes leaky. " I am so glad you told me," he said joyfully. " I thought that you were weeping. Well, it sometimes happens—it is natural." After the lesson I sat by a pond and suddenly a water-bird rose from the rushes and flew over it, and I thought " there will always be new and exciting things in my life like this bird," and it comforted me.

But there wasn't much time for sitting weeping by ponds, watching water-birds : the boys were a handful. There was one of sixteen whom I caught with a village girl in his tent. The Serbs were scandalised by this incident because the boy boasted that he had paid for his pleasure—prostitution was rare amongst their women. It was usual to leave that to Austrians or Hungarians. I found a job for the boy in Belgrade and sent him away.

Major Howie was very shocked at this. He thought I ought to have kept him and reformed him. Major Howie was a Scotsman and, though reputed to be a stern disciplinarian, he had a romantic heart and would never give up a human being. I liked this generous attitude, but I would not give in because I did not

want the younger boys to be corrupted. I also sent away a young tough because he sold our blankets to passing soldiers. Perhaps I was wrong. Theft is inevitable after the long demoralisation of war. A few boys did not like the regularity of life and went back to their pig keeping, but most of them stayed.

Then suddenly we had a cloudburst on Avala—our ravine belched water and tons of mud broke down walls, swept away tents, filled up cisterns and moved bridges. A sick man in the Scottish Women's tents died of shock, and our orphans were temporarily homeless, but we had a sanitary expert on our staff, Miss O'Brien, and she soon put things to rights again. But it made us realise that we must find winter quarters. There was a barracks at Topchider where there were 1,000 German prisoners, due soon for repatriation. The Minister of War said we could have this if we could find him huts for his new recruits. The Minister of Justice flew into a rage and said that it was really his and that he needed it for four hundred convicts. All the relief missions were clamouring for buildings for their pet schemes at the same time, and I felt sorry for the authorities. They were mostly new to their job and many of them had been chosen because their political party or region had to be represented rather than for efficiency. They were trying to run the whole country from Belgrade; this was undoubtedly a mistake, but they said that it was they who had won the war and they couldn't be sure of Croats and Slovenes, who had been with the enemy. They were distracted by a million calls on their attention, and now there were the benevolent foreigners too. Their tradition made them want to be polite to foreigners who were after all their guests, and guests are sacred to the Slav—so they promised everybody everything and did nothing more about it than that as a rule.

We must have been very persistent because in the end they gave us the palace of Queen Nathalia at Topchider. A palace sounds grand—it was really just a wooden Turkish house, very pleasant and roomy but quite homely. The remove was horrible, but the eighty orphans packed, loaded and unloaded, guarded, cleaned and ran round till they surprised even Major Howie into praise of them. It was October now, and I decided to plant out as many orphans as I could amongst master craftsmen in Belgrade, so that we should have a larger turnover in our Home. As a policy also I thought it good: apprenticeships were the rule in Serbia as in our Middle Ages, and there was need of a new generation of craftsmen. I tramped for days through the dusty cobbled streets of

Belgrade, going into every shop I saw. The shops there weren't like ours—they most of them made what they sold.

I wrote this about it :—" the first time I took into Belgrade a whole ton of orphans in the one-ton lorry I felt very anxious. But only one of the masters who had promised to take them rejected the goods when brought to his door, and for that boy I found another place after tramping all over the town with him, and into fifteen bootshops."

But the boys often ran back to us. There was Radoye. He wanted to be a tinsmith. I found him what I thought was a lovely place with kind people, but he ran back after three days, pale and shattered. He wouldn't say what was the matter, but when I asked the tinsmith he told me that the boy had refused to eat. Radoye explained to me that the people were Jews and he could not take their food. He shuddered at the thought, and it was clear that he felt it obscene. Although Serbs were not really anti-Semitic, there was something uncanny to them about a different religion, and some of them believed the legend of the baby sacrifice at passover. Another boy who had chosen to be a tailor felt bored. Many thought this a lovely trade at first—so superior and clean, but most of them wanted to be locksmiths or work in garages. I fixed up thirty-four of them and got a club going for them in Belgrade. Then two other workers came to Topchider and I decided to return home.

We had a tremendous party with wine for the disabled men and the visitors and lemonade for the children. The gipsies played dances and songs, and there were games and presents for everybody. The schoolmaster, who was usually very solemn, loosened up after his fourth glass and made an impassioned speech. He talked of a country which had sent forth saints and angels as ambassadors to Serbia, but as he called it a peninsula I did not think he could be referring to England and I was not embarrassed.

Being with the Serbs had been an experience unlike any other. For the Serbs were still in the Middle Ages, and it is not often that one can take a leap and live in another period of history. Certainly there was something terrible in it—the violence and belief in vengeance that I had found in Stefanovitch's stories, the fear of witches and vampires I had sensed in all the villages, the squalor, dirt and ignorance. But there had been other things: their golden hospitality for one thing, and their poetry. There was Bogosav and other peasants who had talked to me in vivid phrases. Their history was real to them, and this was of immense

importance because it helped them to see themselves as actors in a living drama and not isolated sufferers. Their heroes were demi-gods, alive and present to their imagination. They had music too—their songs were not trivial as ours are. And they had colour and the power of making things with their hands. A good deal of this would go, for it is not possible to remain in the Middle Ages when the world around you is in the twentieth century, but I hoped that they would keep the most precious things—if it were only their pride in their peasant origin, their power to work with one another as long as they remain peasants, their capacity for making a festival out of every occasion, their faith in themselves and their destiny, the spirit in which they keep Kossovo.

VIII. VISIT TO HOSPITAL IN CROATIA

While working in Serbia I had had letters from my friend the Nador doctor. He had been given charge of a large hospital at X . . . ., a town in the remotest south-west corner of Croatia, shut out from the sea by the mountains of Dalmatia. He told me that the hospital lacked the most primitive necessities—there was no gauze or bandages, no night clothes for the patients, the sheets were all worn out and there was great lack of medicines. Stores had been rushed into Belgrade without any exact estimate of needs, and I knew that there was a surplus. I got a truckload of stuff together—sheets, towels, dressing gowns, pyjamas, night-gowns, dressings, drugs, some milk, cocoa and sugar, and children's clothes too, as the Doctor had told me that the district was a poor one. The difficulty was the sending of this precious cargo. The railways had a bad name at this time. Whole truckloads were looted. I decided to go myself and see that it did really arrive. This was considered a daring resolve. The truck would go by goods train and be at least a month *en route*, I was told, and it might be attacked by brigands. As I was not to be put off, the Serb authorities appointed two armed soldiers to travel with me and protect both me and the goods. The truck was dark and draughty, and the rain came in, but I had a camp bed with a straw mattress, and we all three had plenty of blankets and a primus on which we cooked our food.

The first night in Semlin station I was roused by a clanking of chains and a violent push—we had been unhitched and flung down a siding. I ran to the stationmaster. He was distressed. He hadn't known there was an Englishwoman inside it. He had

so many living beasts that would die if he didn't hurry them off. "And what about me—won't I die?" I asked. He began telegraphing orders and pulling switches: the truck must be put on again—but somehow it had got lost and in the meantime the train had gone. That was the first twenty-four hours' delay. I got familiar with that sudden clanking sound and violent push and the rush to startled stationmasters, but in the end we got to X . . . . in five days. One of my soldiers was a Dalmatian, dark and handsome, with liquid gestures—the other was a primitive Serb peasant. The Dalmatian was very protective and courteous. He always divined my needs and saw that the train didn't move while I was satisfying them. In the Zagreb station there was a little place without a door, but he stood in front of it with drawn bayonet, so I was all right. The difficulty was washing, but he brought me a pail of water now and again. The only uncomfortable episode was at Zagreb where we had a long wait. I went to see some friends in the town, and when I came back I found a prostitute in my truck. I told her she couldn't travel with us, but she was saucy and said if I were there she could be too. The Dalmatian smoothed the affair over adroitly—he escorted her, his bayonet drawn, out of the station.

It rained throughout our journey—Yugoslavia had never known so much rain as in 1919. The Serbs said it was to wash away the blood. It was raining when we arrived in X . . . ., and it rained during the whole nine days I was there. My impression of the place was of a straggling town with hostile mountains behind it. The English largesse made a deep impression on the whole district and put up the stock of the Nador Doctor. It was confidence in him that brought it there, and it was the first and, I think, the only present made by foreign missions to Croatia. The hospital was staffed by nuns and they wept with ecstasy and flapped round me like a covey of birds as bale after bale came into their stores. The patients, who were all in their day shirts when I arrived, looked brilliant in pink and blue pyjamas before I left. We found out the orphans of the district and I gave them clothes. There was a moment of crisis over this. Should the children of men who had fallen fighting for the enemy be included, or only those whose fathers had died for the right by deserting to the Serbian side? When I said that a child was a child the Doctor agreed and threw politics overboard. I also opened a canteen in the school where the poorest children could have cocoa. There was enough to keep it going throughout the winter. The Veliki

Zhupan, the Prefect of the Province, gave a dinner in my honour, and there were many healths drunk and speeches made. He was an ebullient, jolly fellow. He said what was most impressive in the whole story was that I hadn't been afraid to travel with two soldiers for five nights and days; no Yugoslav girl could have done this. Actually any Englishwoman would, for to the Serbs we were sacrosanct.

The Doctor was extremely busy—the hospital had eighty beds and he had operations every day, and out-patients as well. But we spent the evenings together. X . . . ., though it belonged to the westernised Croatia, seemed to me backward, isolated, infinitely remote, like a place that had got lost. I was sure that I would never return there: certain that I would never see the Doctor again. This knowledge gave a special undercurrent to the days I spent with him. The talks we had, had a special quality because we knew that they were the last. I was more impressed than ever by his goodness. I wished I could feel that he was happy, but he was still disillusioned—still aware of corruption and dishonesty round him as he had been at Nador. He had imagined his brothers groaning throughout the war, writhing with shame that they were not fighting for Serbia but were on the wrong side, under Austro-Hungary: he found that many had grown rich and had had no desire for the war to end. Doctors had made a good thing out of letting recruits off military service—merchants had made fortunes out of the Government: everyone had profiteered. He was a Serb by race and sympathy and felt lonely amongst these people, though by education he was one of them.

I realised that I had given too much for one hospital, so I put some things back in the truck and went on in it to the chief hospital of the Lika district. This was the only brave thing I did, as I had dismissed my escort and given away my blankets. It was cold and eerie in my van. I spent the night in a siding too terrified to sleep. In it I wrote a letter to Brankitsa: "I am so glad I saw the Doctor again. . . . I think his weakness is in refusing to fight melancholy and disillusion. He says if he had had an English education he would have known how to. I think this is a penetrating remark—I do believe we have that fight for Hope if not for Faith more in our traditions. It made me feel I would fight to the end for them myself. But when he's with people he has such a gay manner and is so debonair and charming. With just a little twist he might be a really cheerful person. But he isn't."

CHAPTER 6

WITH MONTENEGRINS AT PETCH

I. THE AMERICAN UNIT AT PETCH

In the summer of 1920 Mr. Libby, an American Friend, passed through Vienna, where I was then working, and asked me if I would go down to Petch in the South of Serbia for a couple of months. The American Friends' Service Committee had a unit there, with the Montenegrins, but they none of them spoke Serbian, and he thought I might bring in the human touch. I set out for Belgrade on July 22nd and had a rapturous reunion with the orphan boys and the schoolmaster, as I passed through. They were horrified when they heard I was going to Petch. "Don't go there, sestro," they implored. "There are horrible mountains there, all stone—they go right up and touch the sky. They are full of Albanian brigands who roll down rocks on to you and kill you, if you go through the gorges."

To get to Petch you have to pass over the plain of Kossovo. Serbs who come there for the first time fall on their knees and kiss its sacred soil, and I felt ashamed to be an outsider, but I enjoyed its yellow corn and tall shining maize leaves and the distant mountains. I crossed it in a Turkish carriage. This is pleasant in the heat of the day with its canopy that conceals you from the sun as well as the eyes of men, and one can lie down in it and sleep.

There is no railway over the plain from Mitrovitza, though Petch, formerly Ipek, was till 1912 an important frontier town of the Ottoman Empire. In 1920 it was still—to look at—almost completely Moslem. It had eleven minarets and no Christian church, though the old Patriarchate Monastery is a couple of miles outside it. From the hills above, it seemed full of gardens. There were many poplars in it, taller than the minarets and almost as slender. When you were inside it, it was cool and clean, because there were streams rushing through every cobbled street. On market days it was crammed with mules and ox carts, white-capped Albanians, and fezzed Turks, selling water melons, sweetmeats, grain, timber, red leather sandals (which they made while you waited), bowls and belts, and even carpets. The mountains they had warned me about were there indeed, giant rocks that

leapt out of the plain, but they were not sullen as I had expected—green trees clung to their sides. Their highlands had never been conquered; they wore a panache of glory and defiance.

I found the Friends living in tents in the garden of a house that had once belonged to an Aga. Drew Pearson, now a well-known American publicist, was in charge of the Unit, and explained to me what they were doing. It all sounded most Tolstoyan. The Austrians had wanted a military road over the plain, and in order to force the Montenegrins to make it, they had burnt a number of their cottages and forced the homeless inhabitants to come down and work for them. They were housed in miserable barracks and left stranded when the war ended. Around them were great stretches of land. The plain had had a bad name for centuries because of the brigands and had been left untilled. The Government was offering holdings to all families that wanted them. But who can plough without tools and without bread to eat while they are waiting for their harvest? The American Friends had sent their Unit to build villages for the stranded Montenegrins, to help them to break up the waste land, plough and sow it, and to feed them until they could reap their first harvest. It was a very tough job. It meant pulling thorn bushes and dynamiting tree stumps out of the hard ground, sinking wells for water, making thousands of mud bricks, as well as doors and window frames and simple furniture, and teaching the Montenegrin mountaineers to do all these unaccustomed tasks. The Americans were nearly all boys of twenty-two or so, either Friends or Mennonites, a sect that has kept up its old Puritan customs and still live as their ancestors did, keeping the Sabbath and abjuring wine, tobacco, theatres and dance-halls. They were of good, pioneer stock, some of them farm lads, others engineers, carpenters or plumbers. They came from all over the States—some from Kansas, Ohio, Virginia and Cincinatti, while others had been raised along with apples (and were as wholesome to look at) in Washington State and the far West. It was a self-sacrificing task. They none of them spoke Serb, they were all of them homesick: they missed the foods they were used to, the waffles with maple sugar, the yams, clam chowders and roast bananas, and the salads made with pineapple and mayonnaise. They were most of them shy, but one of them, called Cloud, was more communicative. After I had been there a day or two he said to me, "And what is your reaction, Maam, to this one-horse town?" I said I liked it, but he said these folks got his goat—they wouldn't step on the

gas. They were lazy skunks and mean to their women—they left them to do all the work while they sat pretty. I told him that the Montenegrins were eagles—they had lived free for five hundred years in their mountain eyries; you couldn't expect them to sweat and dig like common peasants, but he wasn't impressed. They talked wistfully—most of them—about how things were back in their home town, or " back where I come from in the Middle West where we have an automobile to every four and four-fifth inhabitants, including infants in arms." It was more honour to them that they stuck in at their hard task as they did. The houses were already going up and the Albanians were bringing down ox-waggon loads of timber felled in the mountains. This was remarkable as the Albanians in this region had only been annexed to Yugoslavia since the Peace, and hundreds of them preferred the life of the brigand to military service and the payment of taxes to their new overlords. Every now and then shots rang out on the mountainside, or even in the streets of Petch, and we knew that some noble brigand was killing or being killed. One evening two of them jumped over the wall into our garden and frightened our Serbian cook and serving maid into hysterics, but they ran away when they heard the shrieks.

The reason we lived in the Aga's garden in tents was because his house was so very rickety. This was characteristic of Turkish houses in the Balkans. Sir Charles Eliot gives a reason for this in his delightful book, " Turkey in Europe." He says that the Turks were by nature nomads and did not expect to stay long in one place. True they had been in the Balkans for five hundred years, but they were there as an army of occupation and never forgot that they were really tent-dwellers. The very look of a Turkish house suggested that it was not going to be permanent. On the ground floor there were stables and stores, an outside stairway led to the upper storey, the entrances to the rooms were closed by curtains, not doors. There were holes in the planking of the passages and spiders' webs and swallows' nests in the rafters. No preparation was made for the winter, although that might last for six months of the year. Moreover, none of the rooms had a particular purpose. If you wanted to go to bed, you took a rug and curled up on the floor; if you wanted to eat, a bowl was placed on the floor; if you wanted to write, you did it on your hand. Our Mennonite carpenters and engineers had to do a great deal to the Aga's house to make it habitable for the winter. But the interiors of some of the houses I visited were delightful.

There was no furniture in them, except divans with rich carpets thrown over them and a shelf on which there were copper pots, glowing against walls washed white or blue. It seemed luxurious for tent-dwellers. But after all, in the Grand Vizier's camp at the siege of Vienna, the tents were of green silk, and there were carpets, peacocks, monkeys, and flower gardens, rare Oriental foods and luxurious seraglios.

In spite of the Puritanism of the American boys, we had a gay time in the Aga's garden. Pearson was a man of the world, and a bright American woman had somehow turned up to play hostess to the Unit, while their regular housekeeper was on leave. She wasn't young, but she was still glamorous. She told me that she spent two hours every morning massaging her face: she had a lovely complexion, quite apart from the cosmetics, still uncommon in those days, which she used with great skill. She told risky stories at table about the private life of President Wilson and the night clubs she had visited in Paris and made the Mennonites blush and look at their plates, and she got up dances at week-ends for all the notables of Petch, with gipsy bands and torches hanging from the trees, and plenty of plum brandy and wine.

II. MONTENEGRINS AND TURKISH HAREMS

I wanted to make a card index of the Montenegrins for whom houses were being built, so I visited them in their hovels and heard some terrible stories. They had all been in Austrian labour gangs, children and women as well as men, with no payment except food. One woman had lost all her five children, her two daughters dying while at work on the road. Another family was buried in a snowstorm, all except two children who were sent to the orphanage which the S.R.F. had opened in Petch. They talked of the huts they had lived in in the mountains as if they had been a garden city though the Serbs told me that Montenegrins carried up earth in sacks, so that they could plant a few potatoes in their eyries. Apart from the Austrians, poverty had driven many families down into Petch. Soldiers home from the war could not face naked stone after all they had been through.

I had a curious experience with one of these. He asked me to see his sick wife. He was not the heroic type of Montenegrin—I had seen these about, tall, with blazing black eyes and fierce moustaches, wearing embroidered waistcoats and yatagans in their multi-coloured belts. He wore shabby army clothes, was undersized and drooping. His name was Milan. When he got home

after the war he decided to bring his wife and baby down to Petch. He sold his cottage and left his brother Jovan to follow with his horse and his savings—2,000 dinars, partly in gold. Jovan set out on the feast of Sveti Ivan, the saint of their *slava*, but as he passed through the mountain gorge near Petch he had been fallen upon by brigands, who had killed him, stolen the horse and the money, and thrown his body into the stream. This was *sudbina* (fate), but the worst was that his wife had been taken very ill and could no longer feed her baby.

They were living in one room in an old Turkish house, which was even more flimsy and dilapidated than our Aga's mansion. There were a dozen other families there. I followed Milan up the outside stairway into a miserable kitchen, where there was not even a stove, only a hole in the floor with a cauldron hanging above it. Milan's wife was lying on a straw mattress. Her hands were as thin as birds' claws, her cheeks hollow and her eyes bright with fever. A baby lay in a cradle beside her—a lovely infant of seven months, still fat and dimpled, though Milan told me that he had had no nourishment for some days. The mother's breasts were dry. The child wailed, but with Montenegrin obstinacy refused to be weaned. Milan wanted me to find a wet nurse.

I went to the Mayor. He shook his head, but said he would make inquiries. I went to the police and to the priests—I would have gone to the Patriarch if he had been there. In the end a wet nurse was found, but she was a bulla (a Turkish woman). My heart sank, but I took her to the Montenegrin house. I left her on the verandah and went into Milan's kitchen saying with forced brightness, " I have found a wet nurse for your baby, Milan. His life is saved. She is outside, if you want to see her." He came back, clouded. " But she's a bulla," he said. " I can't give my child to a bulla." " You prefer him to die ? " " Wait a moment," he muttered, " I will ask." He opened the door and in a second the room was full of excited women, all gesticulating and shouting at once. " He can't give his baby to a bulla, sestro, it would be a sin." " But she is a good woman," I said, " and clean, and she's got lovely milk, for her own child has just died, and she lives in a nice house with carpets in it and a garden round it." " It is true, sestro. The Turks are much richer and cleaner than we are. But it is the Faith. The child will go to Hell if he takes the bulla's milk. Let him die, let him die. What does it matter ? " " This is woman's talk," I said, turning to the father and betraying my sex in my despair. " This is foolish

woman's talk. You are a man—you have seen the world. You have fought in wars and sailed beyond the seas. You have been blessed with wisdom and intelligence—you know that the bulla has been sent to you to save your child." Milan hesitated a moment—then he squared his shoulders, lifted his baby out of the cradle and carried him out to the veiled woman, who was still standing, motionless, on the verandah.

A few days later Milan's wife died, but the baby survived, and after some weeks became the pet of the S.R.F. Orphanage.

The Americans had a dispensary, run by an elderly woman doctor from the Middle West. She was a homœopathist and doled out pills in a manner that much impressed the Albanians and Turks who formed the bulk of her patients. Their own methods of healing were mostly confined to wearing texts from the Koran next whatever they believed to be the source of their illness. I used to interpret for her sometimes, though I wasn't sure if the pills were more efficacious.

Moslems often invited us to go into the harems to see their wives. We had to take a Turkish gendarme who knew Serb with us, as interpreter, and hide him behind a curtain. Often the trouble was that the woman had not yet had a child. "She's afraid I will divorce her," the husband would explain. The doctor from the Middle West used to recommend a sea voyage. As the inhabitants of Petch had never heard of the sea, I translated this as a month at the "baths," for there were good baths in the neighbourhood. Often the women were consumptive because of their confined lives.

Once we went into a harem on the feast of Bairam and found all the women hideously painted, not only with henna, but bright green, and their eyebrows charcoaled so that they met together. They were chattering like cockatoos. It was repulsive. I was sorry for the children brought up by these wretched women, who were kept like animals in cages. Kemal Pasha had not yet torn away their veils and set them free. And even to this day the Old Turkey remains mummified and embalmed in Yugoslavia, as though for the benefit and the warning of students of the past. The Serbs treated their old oppressors with a kind of amused tolerance, and the pious among them preferred to remain where they could practise their faith and customs, rather than return to their motherland and be reformed. Already in 1920 their lands were passing into the hands of their Christian rulers. They were not taken from them by force, but the Turks had to sell them

since they could no longer exact feudal dues and service from the *rayah*, and were too grand to dig themselves. Moreover, they lacked the cheap labour that every Balkan peasant has in wife and daughter.

In Skoplye and Monastir one could see former effendis and agas driving cabs or selling sweetmeats in tiny shops. They were still haughty and dignified though a little shabby. Many became gendarmes. I used to have discussions with our gendarme-interpreter on the position of women.

He told me that he had sent away his first wife after the marriage ceremony because he didn't like her face—he had not, of course, seen it before. " Why don't you choose your own ? " I demanded. " That would never do," he replied. " I wouldn't know how to choose. I would be carried away by some foolish prettiness. No, my mother knows best—she made a little mistake that time. No matter, it was soon rectified." " But your present wife is always ailing," I said, for she was one of those we visited. " How often does she go out ? " " Why, two or three times a year," he said, surprised at the question. " But don't you know that it is bad for her to be sitting all day—that she needs movement and air and change of scene. She has her veil, after all." " A veil is not enough, sestro—I can't trust her. Besides it would dishonour me if it were said that my wife was always gadding about the place." " But we go about quite free," I said, " and it's all right." " That's not the same, you are half men. Our women are different—we can't trust them out of our sight, and we can't trust each other where women are concerned." " Is that why your houses turn blind eyes to the street and your gardens have high walls and huge doors barred with iron ? " " Of course—and tell me, you who go everywhere. My brother's wife, is she pretty ? Has she as good milk for her baby as mine ? " " Why don't you go and look at her if you are so interested ? " I said. " If I looked at my brother's wife he would have to kill me," he said solemnly. " He would be dishonoured. I would do the same in his place." " To hell with honour," I said. " You told me yesterday that it worried you to see your mother ill, but you didn't mind a bit about your wife, because you could get another at once if she died. Now you are ready to kill your brother for her sake." " Not for her sake, sestro," he said patiently, " for my own—for my honour."

Before I had lived in Petch I had had a certain respect for Mohammedanism, but now I felt that Moslems could never

advance beyond a certain limited stage of civilisation because of the degradation of women. I did not know that soon the veils would be torn from their faces and their barred doors battered down, both in Asia Minor and on the steppes of Siberia and Turkestan, though not in Yugoslavia.

III. EXCURSION INTO MONTENEGRO

The black mountains that loomed up so near us had a strong fascination, and I once went a four-day expedition into them.

We passed the Patriarchate Monastery and saw the stables where Dot Newhall had spent a night on the Retreat, and the close where she had hung up her washing, to the scandal of the monks. We came to the gorge and began to climb the narrow path along which hundreds of thousands had passed less than five years before. I thought of Drago, ill with typhus, driving the mule that carried his precious books, and Bogosav and the hundreds of others who had described to me the martyrdom of that journey. There was no sign of it now. The mountains were free of snow—the stream that dashed through the gorge was green and clear, feathery acacias and ash trees clung to the sides of the rocks, and high up one caught sight of meadows, where very white sheep were grazing in charge of Albanian shepherds, dressed in white home-spun braided with black. " Look," said Mirko, our Montenegrin guide, in a hoarse whisper. " There they are, the devils—brigands all of them. Let us keep close together. They daren't attack when they see a lot of people." By this time we had become a long caravan; merchants were lashing mules laden with water melons, paprika, tomatoes and kegs of wine, the treasures of the plain. All were anxious to keep close and pass the danger zone as fast as possible. I was on a pony, but when our path mounted away from the stream, he terrified me by walking at the outer edge of it—a false step and we should have both rolled down the precipice. Mirko assured me that the beast knew best, that their packs were often so huge that they would strike the rocks at the other side of the track unless they went at the extreme edge. The French had lost many mules on the Retreat because they loaded them up too much. It was at this point that Novitsa stepped out of the procession and began to lead my horse. He was fair-haired and blue-eyed and dressed in the uniform of a Serbian gendarme but, in spite of all this, he was a Montenegrin.

We began to talk about the brigands. " I ought to know all

about them, sestro," he said gaily, " for I was a comitadji myself for three years. I know all the hide-outs in these mountains and all the secret fords. That's why they made me a gendarme—we're in great demand for the service. You see, we Montenegrins, we have always been an independent people. When we get higher up you will see a fort. The Turks built a ring of them round the highest peaks of our country, and inside that were the Haiduks whom they never conquered. My ancestors were free men, and when our King Nicholas betrayed us and invited the Austrians into the country I left my home with my comrades and lived in the forests and the holes of the rocks, and was as free as they had been."

" But wasn't it difficult in the winter ? " I asked. " Oh no," he said, " the winter was best of all. We built ourselves huts—we knew no one could get at us as long as the snow lasted. We had great stores of sheep and cattle from the summer raids—we killed them off because of lack of fodder, but the ice kept the meat good. There was plenty to do in the winter—trees to cut down for firewood, harness to repair and sandals to make. We had hides from the oxen—untanned, of course, and rather rough. We used to carry down the wool from our sheep at night for our womenfolk to weave into cloth for us. The worst time of all was the spring. Then you are lucky if you don't starve. Stores begin to run short, but the rivers are too swollen to pass." " Do they take the bridges away at the ice-breaking, as they do in Russia?" I asked. " Bridges ? But my God, sestro, the comitadji can't use bridges. They are too well guarded. There are about two months of that, and then the rivers go down and we pass over our secret fords. The leaves come out and conceal us on the forest slopes. A gorge like this is the best of all. We often operated here. You see, the Austrians had to pass this way—it is the only track into Montenegro from the East. All their stores came this route and their ammunition. We did some good work in this valley. Twilight is the best time. You can creep down those mountain sides then without being seen, and we were all good shots in my detachment. Of course, we couldn't tackle them when there were a lot together, but they were careless, and often a few got behind the rest. And there were traitors amongst our people who traded with them—it's sad, sestro, but it is true. They suffered heavily when they passed along here with their flocks and herds. It was the animals that we were after—not small beasts like those "—he looked scornfully at a herd of wild-

eyed goats that were crushing each other to get past us—" but bullocks and sheep and, above all, horses." "On the whole it wasn't a bad life?" "No—not on the whole," he replied reflectively, "except for one thing, and that one thing essential—bread. I have known many lives lost for the sake of a sack of flour. Disguise yourself as you will, they capture you when you come down to the market to haggle for grain. That's how we get them now, you know. Of course, we had peasants who helped us, but they were poor themselves, and it was risky for them."

When we came to the top of the pass he said good-bye to me, explaining that the next valley was a danger zone for him. "I once had occasion," he said, "to burn down a house there. A woman of my family, a cousin, had given herself to an Austrian and they were living together." "So you killed them and burnt the house?" "Not the woman," he said, crossing himself in horror. "I left her for God to punish, but the Austrian and her father, and now the relatives want to avenge him. It's the blood feud, you know. But come to my hut on your way back, sestro. There is excellent fish in our river: I will give you a fine meal." "Bread too?" "Yes," he said reverently, "bread too."

It began to rain and we were glad to come down into a valley and dry ourselves at a Han, as the Montenegrins call their inns. It was just a log cabin with a steep thatched roof. There was no chimney, and when we went into it we could scarcely see for the smoke, but at last made out a young woman stirring a cauldron that hung over the fire in the middle of her mud floor. She was very pretty, with a clear skin, delicate features and bright black eyes. She made us a soup and an omelette and gave us straw mattresses to lie on. She was a widow—her husband had fallen in the war, but she was not going to marry again, she said, because she had three children and a new husband is never good to his step-children. That was why she kept a Han and that, thank God, made her independent. And her eldest son said she mustn't marry again and he was eight and would soon be earning his keep.

After the Han, our track was very steep and to right and left and in front of us there was nothing but naked rock. On the whole I was not sorry when we got back to the rich plain of Petch.

IV. A CAMBRIDGE STUDENT

My thirst for the mountains was not quenched by this expedition, and on Sundays and feast days I used to go with Dimitri up

to the high meadows on the left of the gorge. Dimitri had come as interpreter to the Unit on my recommendation. I had met him the night I had stayed at Mitrovitsa before driving over to Petch. I was walking along the village street when a young man hailed me in perfect English. He had read a booklet of mine on the Serbs, he said, and wanted to discuss it with me. He was a handsome young man with a clear skin and dreamy brown eyes. He told me that I did not understand his people—on the one hand I was romantic about them, and on the other spoke of them in a condescending and superior way. I was much intrigued by this bold criticism on the part of a stranger, and we had a long talk. He told me that he was studying at Cambridge—he was one of the hundred and eighty-four boys who had been brought over to England by Dr. Seton Watson and Mrs. Carrington Wilde. I knew Mrs. Wilde, an Irishwoman of great energy and romantic enthusiasm, and had heard of the great obstacles she had had to overcome. One of these was economy, the other the theory that life in England would be too comfortable for unsophisticated Serbs, that they would be ruined and spoiled by it, and unable to assimilate modern ideas. (The same sort of arguments are brought forward to-day against educating the natives of Africa—science, as though it were ideal to keep them in primitive ignorance, and we had the right to deprive them of the advance in knowledge and control of his surroundings mankind has made.) Mrs. Wilde pointed out that the French were already putting us to shame by educating 2,500 Serbian boys in their *lycées*. She had gone round the country raising funds and getting houses lent, and had found many enthusiastic collaborators. Another notion she had had to fight was that the Serbs would be wild and destructive. As it turned out, they were much less so than English boys—probably because they belonged to a nation of craftsmen, and had been brought up in homes where respect for material was inculcated from babyhood.

Dimitri had been a student in Belgrade and had been mobilised in 1914. In spite of wounds and typhus he had survived the Retreat, and spent the rest of the war studying literature in a peaceful college close at Cambridge. He was intelligent and had an individual approach to life which interested me. When Pearson invited him to Petch he came willingly, although he had told me that the only place where he felt real harmony with his surroundings was in his peasant home in Mitrovitza. But even perfect harmony becomes monotonous to an educated man in a village.

It was with difficulty that I persuaded Dimitri to come up the mountains with me. Though he looked a gentle, dreamy Slav, he was a realist, and he came unwillingly. First, it was a sweat to get up such high mountains in the hottest month of the year; second, it was dangerous because of the Albanian brigands; and third, we might get lost. But when I had dragged him up five thousand feet he couldn't deny the extraordinary exhilaration of it. The air was wine, and we had the whole shimmering plain infinitely far below us. We had scrambled up over slag and falling rocks and through pathless bush, but what Dimitri disliked most was the open spaces of meadowland. He ran quickly from tree to tree with the speed and grace of a roe buck, taking cover, he told me, from brigands. "It is all right for you," he explained, "because Albanians never kill women, but it is selfish of you to bring me here because I am fair game and have no gun. Besides, I was wounded once and my leg hurts me." I felt remorse when I heard that, and we hid in a copse of mountain oak and acacia trees, which he called a gipsy house, and drank wine and ate the meat and rice rolled up in vine leaves, and the water melon we had brought with us, and he was happy again. "How did you get your wound?" I asked. "It isn't very interesting," he said. "It was after the Bulgarian attack on the Eastern front. One night the commander of our platoon ordered me to take a trench. Like most students, they had made me a sergeant, though I was quite inexperienced, because they were so short of officers. It was impossible to take the trench—we were hopelessly outnumbered. 'Do you mean make a demonstration?' I asked. 'No, take it,' he said. Then he asked my name and said he knew it—that was a trick, of course, to put me in a good humour. So I told my men to stick their bayonets into their rifles and steal up in the dark. What do we do next, I wondered, when we had got there—shout hurrah and rush, or is it too soon? I told a man to start machine gunning—then the Bulgarian ra-ta-ta-ta began. Suddenly I heard somebody shouting. Who is that damn fool, I wondered: then I realised it was myself. I was wounded in the leg. I did not feel anything, but I couldn't move. I would have died there, but a soldier to whom I had once given my pocket knife (and I didn't want it, I had another) carried me to the rear. 'Who is this?' said the commander, and heard the same name he had heard a few hours before, but he didn't know it this time. 'All right,' he said, 'carry him to the First Aid Station.' We gained our freedom in the end by fighting, but at the time it

seemed a series of hopeless tasks, a vast, shapeless confusion, where nobody knew what he was doing. You act because you are afraid not to. You don't remember why you are fighting—everything is blurred. The danger you are in is what you are conscious of—you feel yourself a target, terrifically exposed. Besides that, there is the feeling that you don't want to let your comrade down. That doesn't always operate, but it's the highest point you achieve.

" In hospital I was infected by typhus—it was a filthy place, and the living lay among the dead. I was unconscious most of the time, but I remember a lovely dream I had. I said to my mother, ' we are fighting against the Austrians and the Bulgars.' But she said, ' my son—that is only an allegory your father has told you.' I felt happy then and from that moment I got better—well enough for the Retreat."

That made me realise the associations these mountains had for Dimitri, and I felt remorseful again. We read from the books we had picked up in the Unit's library—Oscar Wilde, which I, unlike most English people, enjoyed, and which he, unlike most foreigners, despised, but which I agreed was most unsuitable for that intoxicating air. We tried Browning : that was better ; and then Isaiah. That suited the altitude and our mountain mood best of all. Dimitri, though a pious member of the Orthodox Serbian Church, had never heard of it before.

When we got down in the dusk into the gorge, we heard a throbbing sound. It was as though someone were driving an engine somewhere on the cliff face. Looking up we saw, on a ledge of the rocks, an eagle beating its wings. In another moment it soared into the air and flew out of our sight.

V. SALONIKA

Pearson asked me to go down to Salonika to get their stores through the customs and to buy them oil and other goods. I spent a rather miserable ten days there, struggling with forms and officials, and hampered by the fact that the Moslems had their shops shut on Fridays, the Jews on Saturday and the Christians on Sunday, and I did not always guess the religion of the shopkeeper right and went to them on the wrong days.

I wrote in my diary—" there is something undignified about such a motley population as this. The place does not belong to itself. There are Jews, Greeks and Turks, and the remnants of the war influx. The people live in hovels under the fortifications and their streets are like mountain mule-tracks. Their houses

look temporary, as though they were bivouacking like bedouins and were expecting something else. A terrible wind blows, bringing the dust of the desert that surrounds Salonika, and the brown hills round it are dreary. At sunset you forget this if you climb to the fortifications above the town. Then you have the splendid gulf and the town with its red roofs and minarets and white buildings and bits of green—the fig trees and planes and vines that grow in the gardens—and in the distance the desert hills turned into purple clouds, and very far to the right, the white top of Olympus. . . . The desolation of the burnt port of Salonika is terrific—just a few broken walls and dust, dust like the sand of Sahara. I hadn't expected it. There is dignity in it —it seems the epitomised memory of all the tragedies of the city— the massacre of Theodosius (because they complained of his tax-gatherers), the attack of the Saracens (who sold 20,000 of their young people into slavery), the devastations by the tribes of the North, and then by the Turks, and after that the succession of fires and plagues until this greatest fire of all. It is remarkable to see Greeks all round one—all like the Greek officer at Gerdalitza. I have never been in any place that seems so old—for not even Rome and Utica and Carthage seem so old. I can imagine the apostle Paul breaking into it—feverish, fiery, impatient, terrifically convinced. In these days of bitter hatreds, his internationalism is a challenge. 'He hath made of one blood all the nations of men.' Even Isaiah did not get to the 'one blood' conception. The Gentiles come, but only to make the glory of Israel greater. They are still outside."

In 1920 there still hung over Salonika the disillusion of the war when, for nearly three years, it had been like a prison camp for half a million allied troops and infected most of them with malaria. But when I returned to it in 1929 it had been rebuilt and become the most brilliant city in Greece.

VI. PERMANENT WORK IN YUGOSLAVIA

On my way back to Vienna I visited three of the permanent monuments to British relief work in Serbia—the S.R.F. Orphanage in Nish, Dr. MacPhail's Hospital in Belgrade and Margaret McFie's Blind School in Semlin. I saw these places again in 1929 after a journey through Macedonia, where I was sent to make a report on the Imro brigands and the causes of Macedonian discontent, and my impressions are rather of the later visit than the first and it is those that I will record.

The orphanage at Nish was in a fine building especially designed for its purpose and built out of S.R.F. funds, and was for fifty boys and girls between the ages of five and twenty. It was run by Miss Maw whose vivid smile and quaint, gay manner had so much impressed me when I took over from her at Gerdalitza. She was helped by one or two other English women. The orphanage had a high reputation and was the only co-educational Home in Yugoslavia. Many of its boys and girls went on to the university and technical schools, but they used to come back to it for their holidays, for they regarded it as their home. The English women who ran it had a great influence in the region of Nish and were consulted by officials on all sorts of problems. Mrs. Carrington Wilde visited it every second year and brought it all the support it needed from the English end. Dot Newhall used to go out and camp with the children in the hills above Nish in the summer holidays. It is a striking illustration of the prestige English women had gained for themselves in Serbia and also of the paradoxical gentleness of Serbian boys that the Home and camping holidays should have been run without the help of men-teachers.

After working with the Friends in France, Dr. Katharine MacPhail had gone back to her Ser-rbs and worked with the S.R.F. in Corsica and then in Salonika. She got up to Belgrade immediately after the Armistice and found the problem of unattended sick children there so terrific that she opened a hospital for them in an abandoned military hut. She did this as a free-lance, as an act of faith, but she soon received help from a dozen voluntary societies, notably the Save the Children Fund, and in 1921 bought and moved into a proper building and received a regular grant from the Yugoslav Government.

I was struck by the atmosphere of this hospital; though very orderly it was more informal and human than in most of our hospitals at home. Dr. MacPhail had a thousand difficulties to overcome, but she had the confidence of the Yugoslavs and the devotion of the people who worked with her.

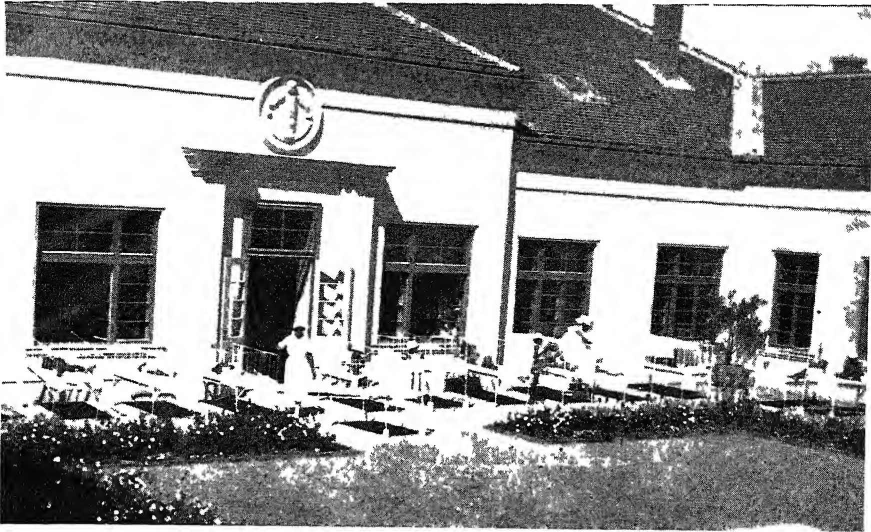
In 1934, as other children's clinics had been established in Belgrade, she sold the hospital to the Yugoslav Government and with the money built a Home at Sremska Kamenitza for children with tubercular diseases of the joints and bones. Here she remained until taken prisoner by the Italians in April, 1941. She was subsequently released and returned to Scotland, where she was able to tell us the record of her hospital. It had been the first and only children's hospital in the whole of Yugoslavia. It

had had fifty beds and a large out-patients department. Altogether by 1934, 170,000 children had passed through it either as in- or out-patients and hundreds of Yugoslav girls had received in it their training in the nursing of sick children, under the supervision of herself and her British sisters. The Home at Sremska Kamenica was even more ideal as it had been built specially for its purpose. As it was on the direct line of the enemy's advance, the children had to be sent back to their homes in April, 1941. (After the war she hopes to return to Yugoslavia and continue and extend the work for tubercular children.)

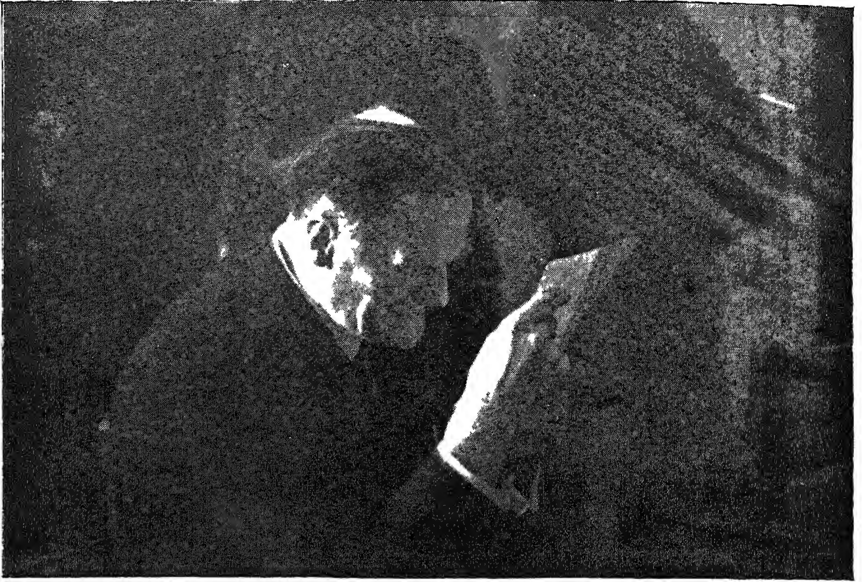
Dr. MacPhail has sometimes been attacked for devoting her talents to a foreign people. A Scotsman said recently, " There are terrible slums and poverty in Scotland. We are a small nation—there are only five million of us. We must conquer our nostalgia for foreign countries and stay and clean up our own towns and villages." But Dr. MacPhail felt herself an ambassador to those who are untouched by our official representatives, to the common man of Yugoslavia, the picks and hoes of the old Karageorge ballad, and she would not leave them.

Margaret McFie was also a Scotswoman in origin and she too made a permanent contribution to the Yugoslav social service, by creating its first Blind School. The nucleus of it had been formed in Bizerta. Ramadanovitch brought out the equipment and the school was reconstituted under his directorship at Semlin. After some years it made a profit out of its industries : basketry, shoe repairing and opanka-making. A printing-press was set up run by the blind themselves and produced braille books for the whole country. Two hundred men blinded in the war were re-educated—many of them were later established in a successful community, each with his house and garden at Novi Sad. By 1930 the Semlin Institute was transformed into a Blind School for children. Sir Arthur Pearson and the British gave the first help to the scheme, but it was a gift of £3,000 from an American donor that set it on its feet.

Americans were exceedingly generous in their gifts to Serbia and yet they did not leave as much trace in the country as they had hoped to do. I asked Magavee, who worked for a while with the Serbian Child Welfare Association of America, why they did not achieve more. " I think it was," she said, " because their ideas were too grand : Serbia was not ready for them. They came over in 1919 and 1920 with high hopes and plans for setting up a model Child Welfare Service all over the country. While



The Anglo-Yugoslav Children's Hospital at Sremska Kamenitsa.
Two Prilep boys (South Serbia).
Dr. Katharine MacPhail



Professor Cizek examining a picture by one of his children.
One of Cizek's pupils.

they were on the Atlantic they decided where all their centres would be. They drew red and blue circles on their maps and plotted the whole thing out. They intended to have ten different centres with outposts dependent on them, clearing-houses for abandoned children, model orphanages, Infant Welfare Centres, even Vocational Guidance Clinics and Homes for the deaf and dumb—they forgot nothing. But they were dissatisfied with the buildings which the Serbs gave them. Their workers did not learn the language and were unable to give the personal touch without which nothing goes in the Balkans. They were a disciplined, well-trained body, but when their scheme collapsed they did not know how to take up something else: they were not adaptable. I must say they did very good work in setting up clearing-houses of destitute children in outlying centres. After a while relatives turned up and adopted the children—but it tided over a crisis. Other Americans did valuable emergency relief in remote parts of the country like the Sandjak of Novibazar and Bosnia. And there were two excellent orphanages supported by a private American donor, John Frothingham. But on the whole they were disappointed. The trouble was they wanted to do things too much as Americans, and the Serbs were bursting with energy and national pride and did not want anything imposed from without. "The Americans had at least a well-thought-out scheme to their credit," I commented. "We English are often muddle-headed in our relief work and act as the whim takes us. We haven't shaken off the Victorian idea of social work, which is rich people doing good according to their lights, endowing a hotch-pot of charities like the Baroness Burdett-Coutts: a ragged school here, a donkey home there, some useful pioneer projects like workman's flats, with churches and bishoprics to make weight. But of course the Belgrade Government was quite right. In any case they probably thought that charity, national or foreign, should not usurp the duties of the State." *

* Later on Dr. Stampar, as Minister of Health, established an excellent Child Welfare and Public Health system throughout Yugoslavia.

in exchange, because it has no coal, and its factories are practically all idle. The only solution is to give a loan. Anything else is a mere tinkering at the problem."

We met many officials of the Austrian Government and the Vienna Municipality at that time and they always repeated the same thing. "We don't want charity—we want to have the means of existence. We are going headlong into a gulf. This isn't just ruin. It is the abyss : it is total destruction. Vienna is a head without a body. We are dying before your eyes."

It was easy to criticise the Government for their low fixed prices, but the people could not afford to pay more. In England during this war the Government has paid subsidies to the farmer, so that he shall not lose by prices that are below the cost of production. The Austrian Government attempted to do this also, but the peasants were not satisfied with paper-money, which was losing value all the time. Inflation was a vicious circle and paralysed economic life. Moreover the peasants felt great animosity to Vienna. The country was conservative, Vienna was socialist. They stopped selling except on the Black Market or in exchange for goods. (Everybody took part in Schleichhandel —it was the only way to survive.) The peasants preferred to give their milk to the pigs rather than send it, at a low fixed price, to feed Red babies. This strife between country and town added to the chaos, but in any case there was far too little food in Austria to feed Vienna.

Austria-Hungary had been a large economic unit—Vienna had imported its coal from Bohemia, its milk, meat and grain from Bohemia, Hungary and Croatia, and these were now lopped away from her. Now there were high tariff walls, enmity, suspicion and only valueless paper money to pay with. The little Austria of the Treaty of Versailles was nine-tenths mountainous. She had timber and iron and water-power and could have got some industry going, but the newly liberated countries of her Empire were intensely nationalist and would not buy from her. They made war on their former overlord not with guns, but with tariffs. Of her six and a half million inhabitants two million were in Vienna. The situation of those belonging to the professional classes and civil service (disproportionately large even in the old Empire) was just as desperate as that of the workers. They had been sucked back into Vienna from their task of administering a huge Empire and there was no place for them there.

Dr. Clark's plan for bringing milk into Vienna was statesmanlike and agricultural aid to Austria developed into one of the most important sides of our work. In the end nearly 1,500 cows and bulls, mostly from Switzerland and Holland, were bought by experts, working with our Mission and handed over to farmers who lived round Vienna. They paid for these in the milk which they sent into the Infant Welfare Centres. This was sold at a low price for babies under two years. Nearly 3,000 tons of cattle fodder were also distributed by our Agricultural Department to maintain the milk yield. Hens and ducks, Yorkshire pigs, Swiss goats, Italian rams were imported and given to small hospitals, children's homes and land settlers, as well as large quantities of seed and fertilisers. So much relief is the pouring of water into a sieve: hundreds of thousands of pounds are spent and the people left when the money is exhausted, demoralised by charity, but otherwise in the same state as they were before. Aid to agriculture is constructive and ought to be given wherever possible, though of course emergency relief has to be done as well.

II. THE SCOTSMEN'S VISIT

On March 22nd, 1920, I was asked to take two Scotsmen round to see conditions in Vienna. I will describe this tour as it gives a bird's-eye view of the situation at that time and what we were doing to cope with it.

They only had a day and a half, so our tour had to be condensed. It was important, for they were from the Municipality of Glasgow and could tap sources of relief if they felt that there was need. They had come in a sceptical mood, believing that the misery of Vienna existed mainly in newspapers. They were all that Scotsmen should be—shrewd, reserved, hard-headed, not to be deceived by appearances or carried away by emotion.

One of them was a bailie, and the other a councillor. They both had a deep sense of the dignity of their office and pronounced the word "Municipality" with a grave reverence, as though it were something out of the Bible. I felt my responsibility in acting cicerone to two such emissaries, and repulsive as it was to probe the misery of a conquered city, it was clear it had to be done thoroughly.

We went first to the University Kinderklinik, the finest children's hospital in Vienna, directed by the world-famous Professor Von Pirquet, who had developed his own system of correct nutrition. Here we ran across Dr. Harriette Chick and Margaret

Hume, a friend of mine from Newnham days. They had researched on hunger diseases at the Lister Institute and were continuing their work here and incidentally bringing relief and often complete cure to hundreds of hunger victims. They showed us the babies. There were two types, the babies whose bodies had grown, but whose bones had remained soft, so that their limbs were deformed : and the others, who though six months and even a year in age, were still like babies a few days old. I found the tiny dwarf babies the most horrifying, but Dr. Chick told me that nature had protected them, and in the lack of proper food stuffs had arrested their development. With these they had the greatest success. As soon as they gave them, not only the right number of calories, but also the proper vitamins the babies began their normal development and escaped rickets altogether. The explanation was that the milk of the nursing mothers was so poor, owing to their long under-nourishment, and the cows' milk so watered down, that they were almost completely deprived of the fats necessary to growth. As we were giving the fresh butter and cod liver oil with which the Lister people worked, I was proud of the charts which showed the amazingly rapid progress of the babies.

We went next to the dispensary in Mariahilf where osteomalacia was treated. Osteomalacia means bone softening. It is a kind of late rickets, the deficiency disease which shows itself in grown-ups. It used to be extremely rare, but as an effect of the privations in Vienna there were now hundreds of cases. We had come upon it frequently in private visiting, and outside the dispensary in Mariahilf there was a long queue waiting. They were mostly people over forty. It is acutely painful, and they were scarcely able to drag themselves along. A girl of eighteen was being examined when we came in. The sight of her harrowed my two friends more than anything they were to see that day. She was such a " braw lass " they said ; yet she was crying with pain.

Dr. Chick told us that the hopeful side of osteomalacia is that, like rickets in babies, it can be cured within two months, if the proper food is forthcoming. Cod liver oil gives almost instant relief and beef dripping or butter also acts as a cure.

The Lister research workers were taking part in most important discoveries about diet. The Austrian doctors, though among the best in the world, knew little or nothing of vitamins, for it was during the war, when there was no communication between scientists that Edward Mellanby had discovered that rickets is a

vitamin deficiency condition. Von Pirquet himself had believed that rickets was an infectious disease, akin to tuberculosis. He subsequently developed great admiration for the work of his British guests, who, he said, were invariably successful not only in curing children with rickets but in keeping artificially fed babies free from the disease. The vitamin thesis was proved.

In a corner I heard Margaret Hume talking earnestly to the visitors: " If we have to choose we must keep the cod liver oil and the butter for the children," she was saying. " They are beginning their lives and most of these people are over forty. They are in great pain but they are not deformed. With children rickets might bring deformity." The bailie nodded, but I saw him write in his note-book—" cod liver oil for Mariahilf."

In the afternoon we went to see two of the food depots of our Mission. At these depots women who had children under six obtained fortnightly supplies: fat, sugar, cocoa, flour, condensed milk and soap. When there were more than two children, rice was given in addition. The mother was also allowed to buy clothes for herself and every member of her family. Our aim was to have one such depot in each of the twenty-one districts of Vienna. Eighteen of these were already running, and about 18,000 children being supplied weekly. Most of the women paid a small sum for the rations, a fifth of what they cost. About 10 per cent. received them free.

The mothers standing beside the children, or carrying them in their arms, looked listless. They were so under-nourished and crushed that if they had had to wait for six hours, they would not have complained. But our Austrian helpers had grown so expert at their work that they were served quickly. The children who were with them were undersized and unnaturally good. They had pale, peaky faces and black rims under their eyes.

It was the food depot of Favoriten, one of the poorest districts in Vienna, that we had been seeing. From there we went into the Favoriten " Notstandshaüser "—houses for the needy. They were tenement buildings built round a courtyard and held nearly three hundred families. No family, whatever its size, had more than two little rooms. We came upon one family of thirteen—a widow and twelve children. The woman was out working, but the children were at home. The eldest, a girl, had a little work in the cemetery, but only in the summer. A boy of fourteen was supposed to be in apprenticeship, but he was too weak to go. The rooms were squalid. There were only three beds for thirteen

people. There was nothing to eat in the kitchen, except a grey mixture in a tin dish. They had been boiling their ration of bread to make a change of diet.

In another apartment we found an ugly, stunted girl of eleven. She was the eldest of a family of four whose mother had recently died, and she was now the housekeeper. It was simple in these households. There was so little to cook, and often no fuel to cook it with. In the next room a woman cried and said that there was nothing for dinner. So we went on. The only alleviation was that where there was a child under six, I could tell the mother how she could have access to our food and occasionally we came on children eating rice pudding and drinking cocoa obtained from us.

The tenements seemed like the circles of the Inferno. When at last we emerged we breathed deeply, thankful to have regained the Upper World, but unfortunately the car we drove up in had startled most of the inhabitants out of their dens and, walking through the courtyard, we began to be followed by children of all sizes and shapes and in every degree of squalor. The numbers increased as in a nightmare; gaunt women joined the crowd. The elder of the two Scotsmen was stout and portly, with shining bald head, large red face and the traditional fair round belly with good capon lined. To surround him suddenly with troops of half-starved people seemed a jest out-Swifting Swift.

The bailie and the councillor were so exhausted that they begged me to take them home, but I felt I had not done my duty. They had not been out in the Vienna forest and seen women and children sawing down trees and carrying home on their backs loads of wood, the fuel for the week. They had not seen people rummaging for rags, bones and parings of food in the refuse dumps outside the city. They had not watched depressed officials eating thin barley soup and turnip in the Mittelstand kitchens. They were going back to Scotland the next day and they had not been to the vast coal sheds and wood yards of Vienna and seen two trucks of coal in the one and a small pile of wood in the other. They had not been to the stockyards, entirely empty of stock. They could imagine it, they said. They had noticed how little traffic there was in the town, how few lorries went about and those three-parts empty. They were depressed and wanted to go home. So I let them off and we returned.

In the evening I dined with the Scotsmen at the Bristol. They had been much affected by what they had seen and the bailie, after

a whisky and soda, talked of a Glasgow ship for Vienna, but his friend, more cautious, said that it took an awful lot to fill a ship. The bailie had lost his son three weeks before the Armistice. It was remarkable, I thought, that he was able to forget old enmities so quickly. I don't know whether there was a Glasgow ship but substantial help did come as a result of the Scotsmen's visit.

III. TALKS WITH AUSTRIANS

I had conversations with Austrians of various types during my stay in Vienna.

A medical student, who had been in the army for five years, gave me his opinion on the origins of the war.

"For ten years," he said, "we were certain that war with Serbia was inevitable. She was a tiresome, troublesome, uncivilised neighbour who must be crushed, if Austria was to live in peace. Franz Ferdinand was strongly of this opinion, although he was a great partisan of the Slavs of the Empire, and intended to give them autonomy. This would, in fact, have made them the ruling race because they were already outnumbering all other elements. Instead of a Dual, we were to be a Triune Monarchy —the Czechs, the Croats and Slovenes were to have all the rights that Hungary had had since 1867. But already the Croats and Slovenes were beginning to look to Belgrade for salvation instead of to Vienna. This could not be tolerated."

"And what was your feeling about Franz Ferdinand," I asked. "I have heard of him as a disagreeable personality—as a grasping man who forgot to pay his bills, and a sadistic hunter who slaughtered thousands of wild animals."

"He was not altogether likeable as a man," he replied, "but he was strong and intelligent and we had confidence in him. He had a remedy for our problems. We knew that we were called a Dying Empire, and that the race question must be solved. The old Emperor Franz Josef had reigned for more than sixty years, and while he lived there could be no change. We sighed for his death—we longed for his successor. When the news of the murder at Sarayevo came, we were in despair—we rose to a man and demanded the punishment of Serbia. Of course, we thought of it only as a punitive expedition—we had no idea that it would launch a world war. We thought it would be, at the most, a campaign of six weeks."

"This is very interesting," I said. "In England it was the fashion to think that you had been goaded into the war by Ger-

many." "Not in the least," he said, "but would not you have felt the same? What would England have done if her Prince of Wales had been murdered in Egypt, and she knew that the murder was part of a tribal conspiracy? Would she not have avenged the crime?" "It would have been very wicked to punish innocent Egyptians for the action of a fanatic," I said, "but I am not an imperialist. A true-blue imperialist would, no doubt, understand your point of view. For me the Serbs are a fine race who have their right to freedom. But defeat must have been very bitter for you."

"I was on leave in Vienna when the collapse came," he said. "All decent men were at the Front, except a few like me on leave. I was attacked by a dozen boys, all under eighteen. They demanded my officer's badge. I refused, but finally they pulled my cap from my head, and a hundred small ragamuffins fought for its ornament. That was the revolution in Vienna—it was carried out by the riffraff and children.

"And what is the solution for us now? The only way out is to join with Germany. It is a bitter pill for we hate the Prussians, and we know that we would be swamped by them and have little individuality left, but we cannot exist alone. We are not an economic unit. The Austria of to-day is nearly all forest and mountain, and Vienna is a great head without a body. But the Entente will not hear of the *Anschluss*. It is a foolish, short-sighted policy on their part and worse will come of it."

I did not ask him what worse he was expecting because I knew that he would have said "Bolshevism." Bolshevism to a conservative Austrian was not an ordered, sternly disciplined replanning of society, but anarchy, chaos, the fight of all against all.

One of my friends, Elsa, was of aristocratic descent. She was a slender, fair-haired woman, still pretty though no longer young. She was dressed with austere simplicity. The aristocracy, even if they had money, which she had not, preferred to distinguish themselves by their plain dress from the New Rich vulgarians. She had been chosen as a child to play with one of the little Archduchesses of the Habsburg blood royal. "She was a horrid girl," she said. "I was always punished when she did wrong, for it was impossible to touch the imperial blood. And she exulted—you should have seen how she exulted."

Elsa said that she knew months before that the ex-Emperor Karl was going to stage a return: everyone "of family" knew. They had all got their posts fixed up in the restored imperial

court. But she knew that he would fail—he had such wretched advisers. And he had offended everybody in Budapest because the first night he had got drunk: he could never carry more than a glass at the best of times, poor Karl. "It is finished, my dear, the old aristocracy," Elsa said with a sigh. "It is like my Siamese cat—the blood is too pure. There was one of the dynasty, you know," she went on in a lowered voice, "who ran up and down the stairs at the Sacher Hotel with nothing on but his sword. He was a little not quite right in the head. There were many scandals. And the terrible upbringing of poor Rudolf—taken away from his mother and given mistresses at fifteen. No wonder there came the tragedy of Mayerling. There is a doom on the family of Franz Josef—they will never shake it off. There will be no restoration of Habsburgs. Do not misunderstand me. I am also of the old regime, but I know that we are finished now: the Austrian aristocracy is dead. Our education did not fit us for—what did your Darwin call it?—the struggle for life. The good nuns—what did they know of the world outside? Never a bath, my dear, except once a month, and then only in a bathing dress of black wool down to the ankles and close up to the ears. That was the convent rule. When I come home my mother say 'run away child, you smell.' And many girls now of our old families—I cannot tell you what happens to them. It is perfectly horrible. Perhaps I am a prig—but I hate dirtiness. I am pure and my sisters are pure, but there are many now in a wrong way of life. It is not only hunger—though grey bread and cabbage, day in, day out, at the Middle Class kitchens, it is for no one appetising. But our young girls—they are coquette, they like pretty things, silk stockings, a new scarf, and this costs now the whole year's pension of an admiral."

Elsa spoke English well and yet she was always faintly ridiculous when she did so, but when she talked to me in her own language I realised that she was a cultivated woman who had brought to the varied experiences of her life an intelligent, if very feminine, response. She made me realise how far-flung the old Habsburg Empire had been. I had seen the Spanish horses at the Hofburg, the influence of Italy was everywhere apparent in the baroque architecture of the Austrian towns, but Elsa's family had had estates in Belgium, and I had forgotten that Belgium had once been part of the Habsburg chessboard. She still had a Belgian police dog whom she always addressed in French. He had been wonderful at smuggling cows over the river from Holland during

the war, she said. He would swim over with the money in a bag and a cord in his mouth and lead the cow back.

Elsa had lived in Dalmatia too, and up and down the shores of the Adriatic. "What a meeting place of north and south you were, of east and west," I exclaimed, "and how queer it must be to be shut into this tiny space now." "It gives me, a little, claustrophobia," she said, smiling gently, "but some day I go out again. Perhaps east this time."

She showed me her treasures—a chipped cup with Napoleon's blue beehive on it, a chair that Maria Theresa had given an ancestor who had fought bravely in her wars. How mixed up with history these people are, I thought, and I liked these trophies better than the antlers and horns of stags, chamois and roebuck that looked down on us at breakfast in our aristocratic flat behind the Town Hall. They reminded me of Wickham Steed's story of Count Czernin, who at the point of death was heard to say, "and when the Lord enquires of me 'what hast thou done with thy life?' I must answer, 'Oh Lord, I have shot hares, shot hares, shot hares.'"

But not all the aristocracy gave this sense of effeteness and decay. I knew a former baron who was ferryman on a lonely stretch of the Danube. He lived in a shack where he served beer. You could summon him with a bell and he would row his little boat over to fetch you. He was tall and rugged, with a shock of hair that stood upright. He was perfectly contented with his new life. The shack was full of books and had a grand piano in it, for his wife was an accomplished musician, and he was busy with inventions and a great lover of Goethe. He always had time for a discussion about literature or life. I noticed that about all true Austrians—it was very restful. One of them said to me, "why do people make themselves out so important? They haven't time for this or that, they are always in a rush. They can't afford to waste their time. What do they mean? I can't waste time because I don't know what time is."

But I was not always in this atmosphere of philosophic leisure. I once had a conversation with Frau Schwarzwald. Frau Schwarzwald was a Jewess of tremendous vitality and energy. During the war and immediately after it she had blown through Vienna like a typhoon. The Austrian countryside was dotted with the holiday homes she had opened for children. She had started the first common kitchens in Vienna and suggested to Switzerland that they should give Viennese children hospitality in

their country. In 1900 she had opened the first girls' secondary school in Austria to be run on modern lines. She had brought up her girls to think for themselves and to prepare themselves for careers: she had given them a tradition of service, new to light-hearted Vienna. Her enemies said that every Schwarzwald girl left school thinking herself a world event. One found them all over the city, running clubs, teaching in schools, nursing in hospitals, or being efficient private secretaries. When she said to me that defeat had been good for Austria, and that in ten years' time when people were no longer struggling for the bare necessities of life, they would realise it, I thought it was the bravest thing that I had heard, and showed faith and imagination as well as courage.

When I came back to Austria ten years later and saw the children's homes, the Tb. hospitals and the apartment houses that the socialist city fathers had built for 60,000 families and let to them for the cost of their upkeep only, I remembered Frau Schwarzwald's saying. These buildings with their balconies and window boxes, their grass courtyards with statues and fountains by Hofmann, their paddling pools, gardens, nursery schools, libraries, laundries and central heating, were a remarkable monument to the vitality of the workers of Vienna. I saw cemeteries turned into public gardens, and it seemed to me a symbol. How unpredictable history is, I thought! It was the easy-going Austrians, not the Germans, that produced a socialist movement that was tough as well as imaginative, daring as well as kindly, and I should have expected the contrary.

There was immense variety in the Austria of my time. Already, had I known it, the movement that was one day to engulf it and, at least temporarily, destroy it, was blowing through its hidden places. I knew more about this than many foreigners, yet no instinct told me what an evil thing had been born. It was in 1921 that a friend of mine told me that he belonged to a secret conspiracy. They met in cellars, especially in towns like Graz and Salzburg. He talked of moral regeneration and social hygiene, of a new world to be created on the ruins of the old. It sounded very good. Once he drew for me their symbol—it was taken from the East, he said. I had never seen a swastika before, and I thought it very pretty. It was only when he told me later on that one of their aims was to purify the country from the "Jewish stain" that I was shocked. Sometimes there were anti-Semitic demonstrations at the University, or Jews were thrown

out of a concert hall. I realised that moral regeneration had a mediæval taint in Austria. I was glad when, later on, he grew disillusioned with the movement. And yet this was the time when Jews were revolutionising the thought of the world—Einstein in Germany, Freud in Vienna, and (to a lesser extent) Bergson in Paris.

Once Freud came to dine at Singerstrasse, and Dr. Clark invited me to meet him. I don't remember a great deal of the conversation, though I recall that when Dr. Clark asked him about Jung he said, " the English like Jung better than me because Jung serves up the dishes cooked, which I serve raw."

I was interested at the time in the New Education movement in Austria. This was to teach from life, rather than from books. Half the time children were not to be found at school—they were visiting mills or the market, or watching barges being loaded. I had seen a splendid viking of a man helping the children to make lessons for themselves in composition, arithmetic, geography, history and drawing, out of these experiences, and had been much impressed, but Freud was sceptical. In the old days, he said, education at least knew what it was aiming at, but this movement was unplanned and rudderless—it had no defined purpose. In the hands of an incompetent teacher this free education was worse than the old. " Educational theory is in the melting pot," I said. " It always will be," he answered.

Freud, I thought, was like one of Michel Angelo's statues of the Hebrew prophets. You could tell from his eyes that he saw farther and more deeply than ordinary human beings. There was tragedy as well as nobility in his face. Many foreigners came to be his pupils. One of them, an English doctor, told me that it was a terrific experience—a plunge into humiliation and despair, that could only be borne because Freud was not only a teacher but a friend who went with you down the gulfs and brought you back again. But a woman, who had taken to psycho-analysis out of snobbery, felt herself subjected to personal and gratuitous insult and soon gave it up.

I had some good talks with socialists. It was inspiring to discuss problems with them, because they had such hope for the future. Amongst my friends was a psychiatrist, interested in juvenile delinquency. He was to do great things during the next twelve years. Until Dollfuss suppressed the socialists in 1934 (and with them all advanced movements) Vienna was in the vanguard of progress in this line, with her Child Guidance Clinics,

Youth Courts and a brilliant Children's Quarantine Station (Kinderaufnahmstelle). This was built for the purpose and had glass partitions, through which the children could be watched without disturbing them. Problem children were brought there and studied by experts for three or four weeks and then sent to suitable homes or institutions.

But the most delightful talks I had were with people not interested in politics and outside the general stream of life, people who belonged to the old Austria, which I describe later. They were shabby and half-starved but undefeated in spirit. Their talk, graceful, whimsical, humorous, its cynicism tempered by kindliness and gaiety was too capricious to record. I cannot recapture the gossamer threads out of which it was spun.

IV. RELIEF WORK IN AUSTRIA

I had had the interesting task of starting the first of the Friends' food depots for children under six in December, 1919, in the nineteenth Bezirk, or borough, of Vienna, and I had a hand in the growth of the system throughout the city and in its suburbs. At this time 110,000 school children were receiving one meal a day from the Hoover Relief. The policy of the Americans was to see the food down the children's throats. They were willing to give meals to toddlers too, but mothers found it difficult to bring their small children to the school dining-rooms and much preferred to feed them at home. Hoover wanted to be certain that only children were being fed, because he said that they had not, like their parents, been his enemies. But if mothers starve, there is no one to look after the children; moreover, Dr. Clark's experience had shown her that they do not wantonly deprive their babies of food. She had therefore made an arrangement with the Americans to take care of the children under school age.

The women received the cards for our food through the city welfare centres and had to take their children back every month to be examined by the doctor and get the card renewed. The advantage of this was that it attracted enormous numbers to the welfare centres. Soon almost all the poorer children under school age in Vienna—about 70,000—came under medical supervision, and many unemployed Austrian girls received training in welfare work. The centres were run by Austrians, but Friends' insistence on working through them and a grant for the enlargement, which became necessary owing to the demand for food cards, helped in their development. Had we known it, we were backing

a winning horse. Soon, under Dr. Julius Tandler, Vienna Child Welfare was to become the best thought-out and organised single system in the world; a system in which children were looked after from the moment of their conception, right through youth. (The system as such existed no more after the suppression of the socialists by Dollfuss in February, 1934. Tandler was imprisoned by Dollfuss, along with Seitz, the mayor of Vienna. Later on he was released and went to China where he died.)

While organising the depots I got to know the child specialists of Vienna, the municipal authorities and women of every class, creed and political colour. It was only by tapping the reserves of voluntary help that we were able to get the huge task of distribution done. Our stores were warehoused in the old cattle market of Vienna, and hundreds of school children weighed them out and packed them for distribution. Committees of twenty or thirty volunteers sold or gave away the rations to the mothers of each borough. An English or American worker supervised each depot. By January, 1921, we were giving more than 64,000 children rations, and the infant welfare centres had increased from thirty-four to seventy. At this period of maximum activity, we had the help of over 1,000 Austrians. Our own members numbered sixty, both American and English.

It was not an easy task to get all the voluntary women to work together. Feeling often ran high between the Christian Socialists (the Conservatives) and the Social Democrats. It was the first time I had seen politics taken so seriously. I was perplexed by the accusations made against us by Catholic extremists that at the infant welfare centres the doctors were giving only Red babies food cards. Another charge was that we were in the hands of Jews. This expression of anti-Semitism was particularly outrageous. It was true that many of Vienna's most brilliant doctors were Jewish, as well as many other self-sacrificing collaborators in our work, but I could see in that only a cause for pro-Semitism.

We had great help, much of it voluntary, from the Jews. My own secretary was a Jewish girl: shrewd, quick, clear-headed, generous, unostentatious to the point of self-effacement, she had the virtues of her people and none of their defects. She was only a girl of nineteen, but I was much helped by her intelligence and good judgment.

The Friends' Mission had many activities. Thousands of children who were in Austrian institutions and hospitals were

given extra rations, clothing and medicines, and we also backed schemes for country holidays in Austria. Many children were given hospitality in foreign lands at this time, but we preferred to give them help in their own country.

The Land Settlements was a movement to which the Friends gave considerable help. They contributed nearly £12,000 and many gifts in the way of pigs, poultry, goats and sheep, besides the advice of a full-time worker. The movement grew out of the need for food. On every scrap of available soil, the Viennese had their allotment gardens, and so acute was the housing shortage after the war, that people built on them out of packing cases, petrol tins and old iron, little shacks where they lived in the winter as well as the summer. These shack-dwellers were the forerunners of the Land Settlement movement.

This garden city movement differed from ours in that it grew up from below. In many of the settlements round Vienna the amount of voluntary, unpaid work far exceeded the paid. Municipal loans were often only granted on condition that would-be settlers would give at least 1,000 hours of unpaid labour to the settlement as a whole. A great deal of work could be done by unskilled men and even by women and children. Officials and professional men used to go out after their city work to take part in the hard toil of excavating, while the hollow bricks made out of sand, cinders and cement, gave occupation to women and children. The bricks themselves were made by machine, but they had to stand in the open for six weeks and be watered daily to make them weather-proof, and this, along with the sifting of the sand, was comparatively light work.

The Austrians are a good-natured, light-hearted people. I used to go out sometimes in a 1*d.* tram to the outskirts of the Vienna forest and watch them building their houses. The Germans would have made heavy weather of it, the English would not have been allowed to do it by their trade unions, the French would have considered it ridiculous, but the Viennese made of it a picnic.

The Pip-house was one popular type used in these Austrian garden cities. This consisted of a kitchen-dining-room, scullery-bathroom, a study and an attic bedroom. Land was left free on both sides of the house so that further wings could be added later on, when the addition could be afforded.

Owing to the fact that the Vienna Municipality constructed the roads, sewers, water and light services at its own cost, and that

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they were built on their land and with so much free labour, pip-houses only cost £115 in our money. This with the help of the housing loans, put them within reach of the poor.

Austrians are an artistic people, and many of the houses in these settlements were æsthetically pleasing. A woman architect, Grete Lihotsky, designed their interiors. Vienna had a bad legacy from the nineteenth century of heavy furniture, bric-à-brac and tasteless decorations, and I had been shocked by the stuffy atmosphere of many of the middle-class flats which I visited. They recalled old-fashioned London boarding houses. In the Baroque period, cupboards, shelves and benches had been built into niches in the walls, and Grete Lihotsky was reviving this tradition.

Though some thousands of cottages were built in these land settlements, and though with their gardens and livestock they contributed to food production and the health of a number of people, they could not solve Vienna's housing problem. The Municipality had extraordinary powers within its own boundaries —Vienna was one of the Federal States of Austria and was like a Free City. It was run for fifteen years by the most enterprising and intelligent socialist body that any city has seen, except in the U.S.S.R., but the Austrian Federal Government regarded it with animosity, and it was not able to acquire land at an economic rate outside its own confines. The Land Settlements movement could not be sufficiently extended to cover the needs, so the city built into the sky what it could not build along the ground: hence the apartment houses already described. The enemies of the Municipality and the Fascist party in Vienna, whose Heimwehr (or Home Guard) bombarded these houses in 1934, said that they had been placed at strategic points so that they could be used as forts, that machine guns had been built into their foundations, and that the City Fathers preferred them to garden cities because they could control the votes of their occupants. The rich who paid the taxes that built them believed these legends. In the meantime, with their balconies, large window space and sunny aspect, they were bringing down the incidence of T.b., which, in Vienna, had been the highest in the world.

At the beginning we had helped students, but later on the World's Student Federation took charge of them. Aid to the universities is described in another section.

Clothing distributions were on a huge scale. Clothing was

given free, or sold at a fraction of its value, to hundreds of thousands of people. This took place at the Hofburg, the former palace of the Emperors. If their ghosts had seen the long lines of shabby, tired men, women and children thronging the halls that had once been so august and brilliant and admitted no one under the rank of a count or baron, they might have been startled. For most of these people it was their first real shopping for many years, the first time to see cloth made of wool instead of vegetable fibre or nettles, and shoes of leather instead of paper.

I had had enough of clothes distributions in Serbia and was glad not to be roped in for them here. They were extremely well run by some of our American workers, who found in them a chance for their organising and business ability, as well as for their kindness and sympathy. I was much impressed by the way the American social workers set about things. It wasn't only that they had everything neat and efficient, with flawless card indexes and case papers—that I had expected—it was the infinite pains they took over a single person. We had some excellent Americans in Vienna. They were well trained in social work and some had been with Jane Adams at Hull House, but I noticed the same thing when I went to America and lived on a settlement. They had the democratic approach, there was no condescension in their attitude, nothing of the Lady Bountiful touch too frequent in England.

Some of their men worked in the warehouse. The American Friends' Service Committee had made an appeal to young Friends to " volunteer for at least one year of service for others before entering upon their life career in business vocations," and the response had been good. Their main field had been France, where they had joined English Friends in the autumn of 1917, and been active in all forms of relief, but especially in agriculture and hut building. In 1920 several came on to Vienna, while others went to Poland, or joined the unit in Petch. This close collaboration with Americans was a new thing for me, and it added greatly to the stimulus of the work in Vienna.

Part of the interest of this was that I was always being asked to break new ground, so that I never grew stale. Soon after I had arrived, I had been sent to make a report on the situation in Graz and Styria. When the depots had all got going, I started what was called an Arts and Crafts Department, and helped artists to sell their etchings and woodcuts in England, and daughters of diplomats and field marshals their delicate tapestry embroideries.

But more interesting than this was my connection with the Cizek school.

V. THE CIZEK SCHOOL

Professor Cizek, though well-known in Austria as an art teacher, had at this time little fame outside his own country. Even here he was much criticised. I owed my introduction to him to Mr. Bertram Hawker, who had come to Vienna on behalf of the Save the Children Fund. Mr. Hawker had helped to introduce Montessori ideas to England and was intensely interested in educational reform. He recognised at once that Cizek was making an important experiment. He believed that if he could get an exhibition of the works of his children touring round England, he could kill two birds with one stone—raise funds for Vienna, and revolutionise art teaching in Great Britain.

I spent an afternoon with Cizek and understood the spell he had cast over Mr. Hawker. I promised that I would spur on the preparation of the exhibition at the Vienna end. This involved far more work than I expected, but it was great fun.

Cizek has become world-famous since this time, through exhibitions in England and later in America, and the thousands of pilgrims who visited his school in Vienna. But now that Austria is again an enemy country, though in many ways she should rank rather as an occupied one, it is well to be reminded of what we owe to him. Herbert Read said recently that he is the discoverer of Child Art. "It was Professor Cizek in Vienna," he writes, "who first demonstrated both the æsthetic and psychological advantages of releasing the creative impulse which is present in all children, and it was he who had the difficult task of vindicating the æsthetic value of the drawings thus produced by children."

Cizek was an innovator—not as important as Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel (he was born when there were not so many new trails to be blazed), but still of their calibre and rank. At the first interview I had with him the children were not present. They used to come in their holiday time, on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. The classes were free to all and voluntary. This was important because it meant that there was a natural selection—children who had no artistic talent did not come, but even so the results were amazing. Cizek kept their productions at the school —the children felt no interest in them once they were done, an attitude he encouraged because he said the creating of them was the important thing, and not the finished article.

I described my impressions to my sister in a letter dated April 18th, 1920 :—

" The other day I spent an enchanting afternoon. There is a certain Professor Cizek here, well known for his skill in teaching art to the youth of Vienna. His main success is with children under fourteen. But he doesn't teach, he says—he only takes the lid off. The lids seem to have flown off right and left under his superintendence, and the results are quite amazing. All the work done is imaginative, out of the child's own head, and you couldn't believe what delightful things are produced. Every kind of medium is used—clay, wood, embroidery wools, coloured paper, water colours and poster paints, linoleum and wood for woodcuts. Some of the children had chosen religious subjects, and it was interesting to see how like the primitives were the results. My companion asked Cizek if he did not point out their mistakes to the children—lack of proportion and so forth. ' But I like these mistakes,' he said. ' The more naïve and childlike these pictures are, the better I am pleased. Children have their own laws, valid to them : it is right that they should follow them. . . . I like the poor children better than the rich, they are less spoiled, their taste is surer.'

" He lingered over each thing lovingly and told us about the child who had done it, what kind of family he had come from and how he had explained his own picture. It is impossible not to believe that one or two of the children will some day be famous, but most of them, he says, become dull and self-conscious after puberty. Very few become professional artists. This he prefers. He likes to think of art penetrating into all the ordinary walks of life. If they go into industry they will carry it with them, he says, ' and in this way it will filter through the social organism. Art is a creed—it should not become a profession.' "

It was difficult not to agree with Cizek that the pictures of his children had a value of their own, and it was an experience to hear him talk about them.

" Look at these reindeer snuffing the wind," he said. " At their tracks in the snow and the little one suckling its mother ! The force, the sense of wild nature ! This is one of Franz Probst's first drawings—he made it when he was ten. What grown-up could have done it ? Now criminal types and prostitutes attract him. He follows them about in the street, observing

and noting, and he draws them with extraordinary power. Yet he is an innocent, naïve boy. He told me once with indignation that a lady had invited him to have a coffee and expected him to pay for it. 'But I had no money—and she invited me,' he protested. He saw a woman kissing a man at the station the other day and said, 'and now I suppose they will have a baby.' He is tall for his age, but a child still. Look at this self-portrait, the skull with the dagger and the candle beside it. This is what he saw when he looked into the mirror one night, pressing back his cheeks. And this other—of himself as a soldier, deserting the ranks. There is nothing morbid in all this, or if there is, he is getting it out of his system by his drawings for child art has a great psychological value. 'And look at this,' he cried. It was by a boy of seven—a picture four feet long of a red castle on a green hill with a burning blue sky behind it, and three dark knights on horseback climbing up a path towards it. 'No one paints like this since Zuluager.'

"And this of a boy with a kid in his arms in a field with goats—what rhythm and vigour! Robert Uhlmann, who painted it, is a child of the people. His father works in a factory. It has the strength of a drawing by paleolithic man. The flowers in the foreground recall William Morris. It was Ruskin and William Morris who first brought art into people's homes, to the wall-papers and the tiles of their hearths and the clothes they put on. I make children do their own decorating—that's my contribution."

I was Cizek's most constant visitor during the next couple of years, selecting pictures and getting them reproduced as post-cards or lithographs, and writing the explanatory pamphlets that were sold at the exhibitions. The most delightful thing was to see Cizek with his class. He was completely at one with the children—the smaller they were, the more he enjoyed them for he saw things with their eyes. Usually they were all doing different things—one modelling a fiddler out of clay, another cutting a Christmas scene into a wood block, or making a peasant procession out of coloured paper, or embroidering a pot of flowers in gay wools, or standing at an easel dashing bright colours on to a frieze of dancing children, or sawing away at a model of a girl in a swing.

Cizek loved to call himself an onlooker, but I think he knew that he was the magician for whom all these little gnomes were working, that it was only when he waved his wand that their powers were released.

Once a fortnight they had a set task of something familiar to their minds, such as a soldier's farewell (during the war), or land settlers building their houses (after the war), or carnival or a storm. Once the subject was autumn. There were sixty children, and each one had a good sized piece of paper, a charcoal pencil and box of paints. Autumn was to be represented by a figure, and the head had to reach the top of the paper and the feet the bottom. This filling of the space was extremely important—it was a thing Cizek always insisted on, and was the reason why these children showed such superiority in composition to children left to their own devices. They then discussed how autumn could be represented. Hans said he would have an old man with baskets of apples. Franz wanted someone blowing at the trees, and Elizabeth, a small girl with long pigtails, said she was going to make a man with paint pots, splashing red and yellow on to the leaves. Then they began. They worked with complete absorption and chuckles of delight for an hour. Their pictures were then pinned up at the end of the room and Cizek discussed them with them.

This discussion revealed the Cizek secret. There was in it the acutest criticism, but it was always affectionate and friendly without condescension. Cizek knew that children can stand the truth. They are often quicker than grown-ups to spot what is not genuine, to be offended by insincerities. " Richard's autumn in a bathing costume looks cold. And here is an indeterminate figure—one is not sure whether it is a man or woman. But Karl is a new boy—he will soon learn that the sexes are distinct. And look at this man rushing with fruit to market! The wild ducks are flying above him just as I saw them last week at Grinzing, with the sun making them shine white and a great noise of wings. Helena Klaunzner has given us one of her strong Tyrolean women, monumental like her native mountains. Helena must always remain true to her heritage.

" And here is Herta Zuckermann, who complained all the lesson that nothing would go right with her. She has given us something incomplete but full of poetry—a child standing, raising her hand, a child who will, no doubt, be painted and finished tomorrow, and yet it is almost a pity, she is so fresh and expressive as she is."

Cizek was like so many Austrians, cosmopolitan in outlook, and he was not interested in his Czech ancestry, but his name is Czech and he was born in Czecho-Slovakia. We owe to this country another great educational reformer, Komenski or Comenius, who

first told the world that they should make lessons interesting to children with pictures, maps and demonstrations, and vary book-work with games, physical drill and crafts. His books were translated into more languages than " Mein Kampf."

I had an interesting time with Berger, the lithographer who reproduced at my request Herta Zuckermann's " Spring," which was at one time to be seen in almost every kindergarten in England and America. I learnt how much craftsmanship there was still left in Austrian industry. Berger was an old-world figure: he had side-whiskers like Franz Josef and was not at all a typical business man. (He committed suicide when Hitler came into Vienna—he did not want to survive the old Austria he belonged to).

The older girls who had passed through Cizek's hands often came with me to the opera or for walks in the forest. This contact with youth gave a special glow to my Vienna days—so that even now when I think of them, it isn't starvation and relief work that come into my mind, but the laughter and gaiety of gifted children.

VI. THE NEW RICH OF VIENNA

The most painful phenomenon in the Vienna of this time was the tremendous outcrop of war profiteers, speculators and smugglers that had arisen from the ruin of the city. On the one side you had poverty and semi-starvation, and on the other, greed, the wildest extravagance and luxury. When industry began to revive a little the professional class and the vast hordes of state officials were even more impoverished than the factory workers. The only advantage they had was that they had better accommodation. I often found people living in elegant flats who, if it hadn't been for the rations we gave them, would have starved. The old Austria had gone to the wall, a new race of privileged had arisen.

These new privileged were everywhere in evidence. They filled the expensive hotels, swarmed up and down the Kaerntnerstrasse, flaunted fur coats and jewels in the restaurants and cafés along the Ring. It was only they and the foreigners who could afford to go to concerts, theatres or the opera. Music and good acting, which had before been the bread of life to every educated Austrian, was the monopoly of this new class. Fortunes were made in a night. Sometimes the Austrian crown halved its value from one day to another. Speculators who bought up foreign exchange became millionaires without any effort of their own—

they had only to have a flair for the right moment. The starvation and misery of the city was enormously increased by these gangsters, for such in fact they were. They held up food stores and goods so as to force up their price artificially. They hovered over the dying city in those dark days like kites and vultures. In the first two or three years after the collapse, the Austrian Government was powerless to control them. When the League of Nations made a loan and the finances were stabilised in 1922 and 1923, this changed. The kites and vultures flew away to look for corpses elsewhere. The Austrians crept out of the holes in which they had hidden during that long nightmare, and again took up their places in their beloved cafés and concert halls.

This was the period of racketeers and gangsters, of rum-running and high-jacking in America. The speculation and profiteering that went on in Vienna was far more wicked and cruel than this. The crimes it committed were against the weak and helpless—against the children and the very poor. It was done without personal risk : most of it was well inside the law, and if not, everyone knew that the law was too feeble to prevent it. Courage was needed by a gangster in Chicago, but none by a currency manipulator in Austria.

Unluckily many of these speculators were Jews. Not by any means all, but the Jews were more conspicuous than the others, and made a noisier display of their ill-gotten gains. This caused a great wave of anti-semitism in the ruined city.

Anti-semitism in its modern form is an Austrian product. It grew up in the nineteenth century, and its first effective exponent was Lueger, the Christian Socialist Mayor of Vienna. He did not invent it, he gave it shape and form.

To understand it one must go back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution began to invade Central Europe. The Habsburg Empire was behindhand with this. The aristocracy was too grand in its ideas, and temperamentally unsuited to take up business careers, and there was only a small middle class. The newly emancipated Jews filled the gap. They supplied the lubricating oil of industry. The Rothschilds, for instance, were the financial kings of Central Europe. Banks were mostly in the hands of Jews and the export trade almost entirely. They were good linguists and, because of the dispersion, they had friends and relatives in every country. In Hungary and to a lesser extent in Bohemia and Austria, they captured industry as well.

In England the Industrial Revolution had been carried out by our own people, chiefly by Nonconformists whom the law excluded from the Professions and Civil Service, and custom or their conscience from the Army, Navy and Church. It was God-fearing Puritans and Evangelicals who were our bankers, factory owners, shopkeepers and the builders of our slums. They regarded with complacency the horrors of child labour, starvation wages and insanitary conditions, that came in the train of industrial change, because Adam Smith and the doctrine of *laisser faire* taught them they were inevitable and the profits were good. The Nonconformists excited no blind rage amongst the people, for they were distinguished by no physical type from the rest of the community. But the Jews are always different from the people with whom they live. Often this is because of their religion, manners and tradition, but even when they have given these up, there is still something foreign about them. In Central Europe the population was predominantly peasant, and in any case suspicious of industrialisation. The anti-semitism that grew up in Austria in the nineteenth century was thus to a large extent the expression of hatred of industrialisation and of capitalist exploitation. Other elements entered in—xenophobia, religious intolerance, jealousy of success, suspicion of originality and brilliance, but this was the basic element.

Already in the years immediately preceding the Four Years' War, anti-semitism was rife in Vienna, and it was no accident that it was while standing on scaffolding, painting the houses of the well-to-do Viennese, that Hitler imbibed the poison out of which he was one day to brew the most hideous heresy and most fantastic lie of modern times.

But it was not the descendants of the Jews who had helped in the Industrial Revolution of the Habsburg Empire who were responsible for this fresh wave of hatred. They were public-spirited citizens by this time—doctors, lawyers, musicians, actors, journalists and professors as well as merchants and bankers. They aroused jealousy, it is true, amongst the lazier and less intelligent Gentiles, whom they had beaten in the open field, but they were admired and, above all, they were indispensable. It was what the Austrians alluded to, with extreme venom, as the Eastern Jew, that excited them now. These had invaded Vienna in the early part of the century, fleeing from Tsarist pogroms, and again in 1915 when the Cossack armies had entered Galicia, preaching the deliverance of their Slav brothers the Poles from their Jewish

neighbours. They had been well received at first and had lived quietly and in considerable poverty in Leopoldstadt, the Jewish quarter of Vienna. But they had a few jewels, and maybe relatives to help them; the opportunity was more than they could resist. It was as birds of prey that they flew out of their obscurity in the Vienna slums. Persecution had been a bad school. The exploited became the exploiters. The novelty of riches intoxicated them. They could not resist taking the seats at the opera once reserved for Emperors and Archdukes. Their wives and daughters flaunted their new finery in the holy places of the old nobility—they talked in loud voices to attract attention, they did not realise the passion of hatred they were rousing, not only against themselves but the whole of their race. Yet it was as illogical and ridiculous to visit the sins of this handful of people on the whole Jewish nation as it would be to condemn Italians because Italy invented Fascism and produced Mussolini and his black-shirts.

It was not that the aristocratic or good bourgeois Austrians any longer felt a prejudice against money making. It was the height of their ambition now to get their sons and brothers into trade with foreign countries or into banks. In 1921–22 these sprang up like mushrooms all over the city. Where there had once been cafés, palaces, warehouses or private houses, there were now banks, modern and shining. Before the war it had been the army or the civil service—but the army had crashed, and civil servants were half of them starving on a pension barely sufficient to buy a few tram tickets. Now instead of boasting of the uncle or cousin who was something down in Dalmatia or Herzegovina, or a captain in the regular army, they whispered with pride that they had someone in the Creditanstalt who was giving them tips as to what to buy or sell. For the orgy of speculation was by no means confined to the Jews. Very few could live on their salaries, and no one at all on their pensions, so this was not to be wondered at. Honest folk who had looked on speculation with horror as immoral gambling, had learnt a lesson, just as the thrifty and the patriotic who had put their money into savings banks and war loans and woke up to find their £1,000 bonds not worth a postage stamp, had learnt a lesson. The main difference was that the Austrian was not as good at the new game as the "Eastern Jews," and if he did succeed, he made no display of his riches. He had taste. There had been less vulgarity in nineteenth-century Austria than in any country in Europe.

VII. OLD AUSTRIA

The old Austria lurks everywhere in Vienna, and yet it is possible to be there and not find it. One has to look for it. It is in the quiet eighteenth-century squares and fountains of the Inner City, in the Baroque churches with their green domes, which you come upon suddenly in the middle of a shopping centre, like St. Peter's, in the villages perched on high hills among vineyards that are now part of Vienna, like Grinzing. It is in the Wiener Wald, the forest which washes up to its gates, with its clearings, where gentians grow, from which you glimpse the white crowns of the Semmering Alps or, looking far below you, the wilderness of roofs and domes that is Vienna. And if it were just roofs and domes, you might not recognise it, but riding above them all is the vast bulk of St. Stephen's Cathedral with its towers and its spire, and in the distance the curling snake of the Danube, winding through the plain.

All this is the old Austria, but it would not have meant much to me if the Austrian who belonged to it had perished, stamped out by the gaudy, hustling world of the New Privileged. But though he was no longer in evidence, he could be found everywhere. He might be a taxi driver, an innkeeper, or a baron—you could tell him by his soft, dipthonged speech, by his good-tempered, slightly cynical humour, by his understanding of living things, animal as well as human, his gift of intimacy. The young people went out with their guitars to the Wiener Wald on Sundays, regardless of whether their shoes would last out the ramble. They were not broken by defeat as the Germans were—they had greater resilience. Art and music and the joy of living, meant more to them than possessions.

I do not know what Austrians of the future will be like, but Austrians of this old type were moulded by a definite culture, different from every other. It is difficult to say what it is, but it is something extremely different from what many people consider Viennese—frivolous, pleasure-loving, rather shallow and sugary. There is gaiety in it and humour, lightness and grace, but a touch of melancholy, too. It is more like Schubert's Unfinished Symphony or Mozart's concerto for the flute and harp than anything else. It is not an accident that music is Austria's great gift to the world, for music can say what their culture is better than words. There is depth as well as delicacy in it, precision as well as gaiety. They are a critical people, and this

critical power of theirs differentiates them as strongly as their humour and their grace from the Prussian and North German. It is that which has created their good taste and made them a country of strong individualities. They are not easily regimented. You do not hear from their lips the copybook maxims of the German university student or answers to catechisms à la Goebbels. It is true that the Nazi creed caught their rootless intellectuals and malcontents and their silly youth, who thought an illegal conspiracy exciting, but they were disillusioned as soon as it had become dominant, as far-seeing Austrians had always said they would be. It is true also that Graz and Vienna have furnished the S.S. and S.A. with degenerates who are as cruel and sadistic as any of the German Nazis, but they are exceptions.

But to return for a moment to the past. It has been the strength of Austria that she has given something of the patina of her culture to all the lands she once ruled. You may find it in Cracow and Prag, in Buda and Botzen, as much as in Salzburg or Vienna. The world knew about the dead hand of Austria, the oppression of Habsburg rule, the tyranny of Metternich and the sinister network of his spies. Gladstone could say—" you cannot put your finger on a spot in the map of Europe and say ' here Austria did good.' " But Gladstone and the world knew nothing of this something else, that was intangible and that one may perhaps call an art of living, and which you could find amongst beekeepers and busmen drinking the new year's wine in a wayside café in the Vienna outskirts, as readily as in a flat overlooking the Belvedere Gardens or a baronial castle.

The Austrian Empire crashed because of its dead hand and its obscurantist politics, and because all the revolutions of '48 and the upheavals of the nineteenth century taught its rulers nothing, but everyone who travels in the lands that once belonged to it knows that it left something behind it.

I was pondering on all these things one day in the spring of 1922, when Vienna had begun to revive a little. I was sitting under the flowering chestnuts of the Stadt Park, drinking a coffee that was not made of ground acorns but of the genuine bean, and nibbling a crisp horseshoe kipfel made of white flour, and suddenly I saw a Slovene friend from my old days with the Serbs. He was on his way back from England, had looked for me everywhere and at last found me. It was not long before we were talking about the Vienna we saw around us.

" You admire this city, I can see," he said. " But all these fine

palaces and churches and theatres, these spacious boulevards and brilliant shops, were built with our life-blood. There were more Slavs in the Empire than any other race—Czechs, Croats, Slovenes, Poles, Slovaks and all the rest. Vienna, Budapest, Prag—it was out of tribute levied on us that they were built. And what good were they to us? The oppression of the Austrians and Hungarians was greater than the oppression of the Turks, for they threw chains over our spirit, and the Turks left our spirit free. And it is because the Habsburg dynasty canalised and personified that evil tyranny that it has gone for ever. I know that there are factions here who dream of a restoration. That can only be made over the dead bodies of all the Slavs of the former Empire."

"You are right," I said, "and yet I still believe that there was some gift that Austria gave the world. Probably we'll be able to understand later on when the old bitterness is forgotten. If one had talked to the slaves of the Ancient World, they would have given a black picture of Greece. And yet where would you and I be without Hellenic culture?"

"It is a blasphemy to compare the two," he said, and we talked of something else.

VIII. THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

In 1920 Lady Mary Murray and her daughter Agnes came to work with the Friends in Vienna and opened a department known as the Professors' Action—that was, relief for the university professors and their families. Against the Quakerly background of Singerstrasse, Agnes, with her triumphant air of youth, elegance and wit, looked like a wild swan that had got by mistake amongst barnyard fowls, but she accomplished her mission in Vienna with great seriousness and efficiency. When she left, I inherited the "Action" from her. I was impressed by the honour. Now, I thought, I shall be in touch with the learning and science of the most ancient and famous of European universities. I was a little dashed when I looked at Agnes Murray's card index and found that it consisted almost entirely of widows.

I went round visiting Agnes Murray's widows and realised soon enough why they had had the first call on the university relief funds. Their pensions, which had at one time sufficed for a life of unostentatious dignity, were now only enough to cover the rent of their flats. These were kept artificially low by a merciful Rent Restriction Act. At least they had somewhere to hide, and the shame of their poverty was not exposed to view. There were

many things that could be done for them besides sending them regular food parcels, clothing and coal. Sometimes one could find them a foreign lodger, who could pay them in a sound currency, or sell some treasure for them at a reasonably high price to an American interested in antiquities. I found the widow of a world-famous doctor suffering from osteomalacia, and was able to provide her with cod liver oil as well as a pupil for German.

One of them gave me a strong impression of what the war had meant to the women of Austria. She said to me, " you've no idea what we suffered. My only son was in it from the first day—always at the front, first in Galicia against the Russians and then in the Dolomites against the Italians. I had no peace either night or day because of my fear for him. When I saw a lame or blinded soldier in the street, I shuddered. I shut my eyes and tried not to think. It was always my son whom I saw. When I got a letter, it was never less than eight days old and I thought ' he who wrote this is perhaps already dead.' At one time he wrote very cheerfully—the Italians were fleeing in disorder. He led his company and they swept the Asiago plateau. They were all ready to rush down into the plain of Lombardy and pursue the enemy to Rome. And then somehow the advance was stopped, and he never had hope any more. That was in 1917. And I was always standing in queues for food, and often there were only turnips to eat. But I didn't mind that. All I thought of was my son. I made shirts and paper quilts for the hospitals—I worked night and day. I thought that so I would help it to end quickly and that then perhaps my boy would be safe. All for nothing—all poured into the abyss. All stupidity and madness. But my son came back. That is what mattered after all. Of course, he is often depressed, poor fellow—he is a lawyer. He would have been high up in the civil service, but now he has nothing much to do, like so many of them. But he's alive. And I never believed he would come through."

The pensioners of the " Action " were not only widows—there were also the retired professors. Some of these were delightful, abstracted, unworldly—dazed by the crumbling of the society they knew. They used to begin by discussing with me the price of *Beinfleisch* (the brisket of beef so much appreciated in Vienna), but were easily decoyed into talking of their special subjects. One of them, a well-known astronomer, took me to see the stars from the Vienna Observatory. He showed me Saturn with her ring, and Jupiter with her moons, but what really seemed to please him

was that one day the earth would be so cold that there would no longer be life on it. A specialist in Byzantine history had a vision of more immediate catastrophe. It had all happened before, this crash of empires, this hurtle into ruin of an ancient culture. It was consoling, he said, that it had happened before. The Dark Ages were upon us again, there would be another war and then everything would go, our whole civilisation, all this machine world we have built up with such care. It was inevitable, for the created thing turns against the creator. Man had defied the gods with his science and his arrogant inventions. We were living now in the Goetterdaemmerung, the Twilight of the Gods. The West was decadent. Afterwards there might be new worlds and other renaissances, in eternal Nietzschean cycles, or perhaps culture was such a tiny flame that it would be snuffed out altogether. The old Germans had shown that they understood these things, he said, in their Siegfried saga, and the Ancient Greeks had shown it in their tragedy.

I met many in Vienna at that time who had this " death wish." Spengler's Downfall of the West had great vogue and satisfied the sense of doom that was prevalent. This tragic conception of life fitted in later on with the darker side of Nazi doctrines, for which the ruined intelligentsia and middle class provided the real seed-bed.

In the autumn of 1921 there was another catastrophic fall of the Austrian money, and I heard stories of young " Privat Dozents " who were starving. In Austria as in Germany if you want to become a professor, you have first to work as a dozent without any pay from the university. You get money from the students who attend your lectures, but most dozents have another job as well—they are curators of museums, or doctors, or they do research. There were a couple of hundred of these dozents in Vienna, and I invited them to come to see me at my office in the Hofburg.

The majority had some source of livelihood, but there were thirty or forty of them who were near starvation. This was harrowing, yet these interviews were the most lively I had in Vienna. Men of learning are in all countries a race apart. Innocent, helpless and touching, their attention is easily distracted from their sufferings, from the price of *Beinfleisch* and the charwoman who gets in a day what is now their income for the year, to the white flowing tails and dark stripings of the extinct quaggas of South Africa (two different kinds), indecipherable Etruscan

inscriptions, the peculiarities of the Bantu language, the tomb of an Egyptian prince in Palestine who must have been Joseph, the music of the Balkans compared with the Indian, or the German version of some exquisite Chinese poem. Austria, shut off from the world by its wall of ruined currency, could no longer provide pupils for Chinese or Bantu, nor could its archæologists hope to complete their diggings of Hittite towns in Palestine. One of them had worked out a theory that every man of genius was born when his parents were aged some multiple of seven, but he himself had five children who, whether they fulfilled these conditions or not, were all of them very hungry. Talks with dozents often switched from extinct quaggas and Chinese philosophy to condensed milk or cod liver oil.

In the summer of 1922, Oxford and Cambridge offered the hospitality of their colleges to fifteen Austrian men of learning. I found the choice of these, and the planning of their journey a hopeful task. Links broken for seven years were to be rejoined. In the autumn of 1922 the League of Nations decided to give Austria a loan so that she might stabilise her currency, and be saved from immediate ruin. Reconciliation was in the air. Hope dawned. True, France was still implacably set against the *Anschluss*. As long as the two countries were under liberal republics, this road to recovery was kept shut. Hitler was to do by force in 1938 what milder statesmen had wished to do by treaty. Even more hopeless was the desire expounded to me by progressive Austrians, to see a Danube Federation on a Socialist basis, an amplified Tennessee valley we should call it now. Reactionary Hungary was in the way, and the intense animosities of the old Habsburg Empire. But even if illusory, the Austria of 1922 was showing signs of recovery. Our large-scale relief came to an end and I returned to England.

IX. THE PERSONNEL OF THE RELIEF MISSION

The harshness of leaving Vienna was softened by bringing part of it to England with me in the persons of the fifteen men of learning. And the Cizek children's pictures were still going round the country, bringing something of the vitality and colour of Austria into our dark, industrial towns. I felt like a war profiteer—the ruined city had made me rich in impressions and experience.

It had taught me incidentally a great deal about how relief work should be done. I had seen its small beginning in November,

1919, and had shared in its rapid expansion and in many of its activities. Relief in a city that belongs to an old culture is an entirely different thing from the work amongst Serbs from which I had just come. Vienna had her social services intact and an energetic Socialist Government bent on expanding them. The organisers of the Friends' relief work took full advantage of this. They so gained the confidence of the authorities, not only in Vienna but also in England and America, the fountainhead of supplies, that great power was given them, and vast sums of money (much from non-Friend sources) put at their disposal. We had done our own buying and were at one time making purchases in thirteen different currencies.

The Friends had been fortunate in their choice of leaders. Dr. Hilda Clark, who started the work and was in charge of it for three years, could grasp a problem as a whole, and had the kind of constructive imagination that saw a way of tackling it, as well as the faith that overcomes all obstacles. Backed by the drive, energy, genius for detailed organisation and experience in infant welfare of Edith Pye, she was formidable. From time to time Kathleen Courtney came out to give advice and help, and it was possible to draw on the stores of her wisdom and her long experience in international affairs and in organisation. These three women had the right attitude to the people they were helping—respect, sympathy and unsentimental affection, and they were—as far as is possible in human beings—quite selfless in their attitude to their work. I am not thinking of the financial side, for many worked in Vienna at their own expense, but that all thought of personal publicity was anathema to them. They were pure in motive and quite incorruptible. This seems unnecessary to stress, but unfortunately I have seen relief workers (usually not among Friends) developing a *manie de grandeur*, when vested with unaccustomed authority and prestige.

Hilda Clark had the kind of humility (for want of a better word) that has a liberating effect. I mean by that, that being intellectually honest, capable of self-criticism and devoid of personal ambition, she was able to appreciate other people's gifts. Great opportunity was given in Vienna to workers to show their initiative. Many of us had positions of great responsibility. She was not afraid of delegating authority and because of this, much more was achieved and the work often expanded in unexpected directions. Talents were used, not stifled by autocracy or entangled in a bureaucratic machine. Not all could appreciate her—she

Linocut by girl, aged 14.
Reindeer by Franz Probst, aged 10.

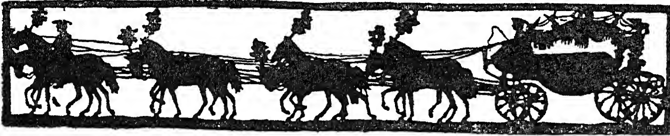
Musical talent is fostered in the U.S.S.R.:

Percussion band of factory workers' children at Yaroslavl.
Music school at Kiev, similar to the Pushkin Colony.
A Moscow house-painter has bought his little girl a piano.

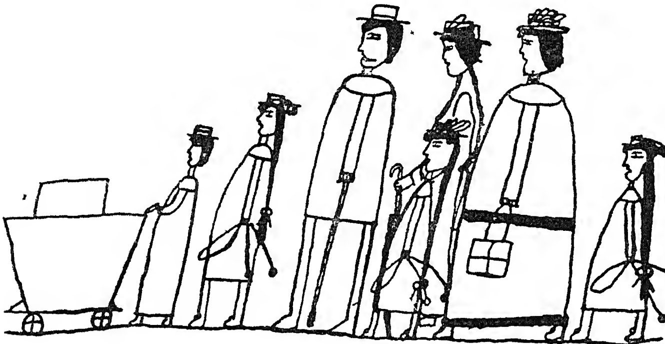
seemed to many aloof, to others absent-minded, but she had shrewd judgment, the vagueness was superficial.

The Americans joined us too late to be pioneers, but they accepted a somewhat subordinate role with self-discipline and generosity. They brought great spit and polish into the distribution of relief, for nearly all of them had had training either in social work or organisation. We learnt to know an America that was very different from the usual Big Business or globe-trotting America, the only one familiar to many Europeans at that time.

Examples of Drawings by Cizek's Pupils and his Comments



The funeral of Franz Josef, by Robert Uhlmann, aged 13. "This made a great impression on Robert; after seeing it he came to the class and cut it out of paper with a penknife."



Figures by Gertrud Brausewetter, aged 7. "Look at the strength of these figures; they are as monumental as the Sphinx, as powerful as a bas-relief of Ancient Egypt. How characterised they are, and what rhythm there is, in spite of their stiffness!"

Children by Ine Probst, aged 14. "How observant she is of little children and with what understanding and kindness she represents them!"

CHAPTER 8

FAMINE RELIEF IN RUSSIA

I. THE JOURNEY

In September, 1922, the Friends sent me to do famine relief in the department of Buzuluk in the province of Samara. This was a night and day's train journey beyond the Volga, in the far south-east corner of Russia, no great distance from the foothills of the Urals.

I spent three days in Warsaw on my way out and heard something about the Friends' work in Poland from Florence Barrow, who was then in charge. She said that the Unit had started by doing some anti-typhus work, disinfecting houses and people. Two of their nurses had worked in camps for Bolshevik prisoners and had both caught typhus but fortunately recovered. But the Friends had found the greatest needs in east Poland among the refugees returning from Russia. Millions had been evacuated in 1915 by Tsarist Russia following what we should now call the "scorched earth" policy, after the abandonment of Warsaw. Most had been taken to the Volga area whence in 1921 they had been driven out by the famine. Some of them had had to walk nearly all of the two thousand miles of their journey—only to find burnt ruins where their villages once had stood. The Friends had concentrated on the agricultural side of reconstruction. They had bought more than a thousand army horses from the Polish Government, and sent out columns of them with Polish drivers under the supervision of the Mission workers. They had ploughed 24,000 acres by this means and distributed vast quantities of seeds and tools. In the winter the "columns" had hauled wood so that the refugees could build their own houses. Florence Barrow was the kind of Quaker one expects to find in the Society, but who is, in fact, rare, like everything near perfection. She had large, quiet, grey eyes, a quiet, unhurried manner, sympathy that was profound and genuine, but unsentimental and practical, and the kind of selflessness and appreciation of other people that had impressed me in Dr. Hilda Clark. I was not surprised that the Unit was doing a living work under her leadership.

In Warsaw I met up with Marjorie Rackstraw, who was returning to the famine area after leave in England, and we continued

the journey together. We had ten hours to wait on the Polish border and went to a village where there was a market. I couldn't help comparing it, sadly to its disfavour, with a Balkan market. There were no vivid clothes, no gipsies playing *kolos*, nor people dancing, nor blind guslars reciting folk tales. There were a few cheap factory goods and some vegetables and pigs, but Poland looked terribly poor. East Poland had always been exploited and I was seeing it after nearly seven years of war. We were glad when the Russian train came, and I was delighted with the wide, tall carriages with their sleeping berths. When we had settled in I asked Marjorie Rackstraw to tell me about the work. I had heard from everybody how much beloved she was by the Russian peasants and the other workers.

" It was very terrible," she said, " but I am glad to be going back. I was in charge of an outpost at Alexeevka, seventy-five versts from Buzuluk.

" It is the hardest hit of all the districts. There is nothing but open steppe as far as the eye can see. The forest land is many miles away, so only the richer peasants have wooden houses. The houses of the poor are built of bricks made from mud and straw baked in the sun. The roofs are thatched with straw. When the houses fell empty in the famine this was eaten by the horses, so lots of cottages are just mud walls now. The bulk of the fuel used to be made of cow dung and straw, but since most of the animals have disappeared in the famine, to keep the houses warm has been a terrible problem. Some of the more dilapidated wooden houses, left empty by their owners who fled from the famine or died of starvation, have been broken up and used as fuel. The tough steppe grasses are burnt, and some wood hauling from a distance has been made possible by the distribution of horses which our Society have imported from the Kirghiz steppe.

" Since April, when Nansen's food began to arrive from Odessa, we have been able to feed all the people in my district. This was the turning point in our work. Before it arrived we could only feed a percentage of them. The mothers went down on their knees begging us to allow their children to take it in turns to have the meal provided, but we knew that the ration was so small that the children could not live on less, and to divide it would mean that all would die. To refuse was heart-breaking but there was no alternative.

" The spectacle of famine was more startling in Buzuluk than in the villages, because desperate people trekked to the town from

all quarters. Some died by the wayside before arriving and others fell down in the streets from cold and exhaustion. Sleigh-loads of frozen uncovered corpses passed along the streets towards the cemeteries. A man who had lost his wife from starvation, having nothing left to eat, brought his two children to Buzuluk and took them to a children's home. They were turned away because the pressure on the Home was so great that they had had to make a rule that only children who had lost both parents could be admitted. When the father heard this he went away and shot himself so that the children might be eligible.

" At first we fed only children, but parents were dying in such numbers that the Government could not cope with the orphans, and they urged us to change our policy and feed adults also. If not, who would be left to do the work, to plough the fields and haul the rations ? "

" And how did it all come about ? " I asked, for I had closed my mind to the famine until starting my journey.

" In 1920 there was a poor harvest, and in 1921 there was no rain at all. Most of the seed never germinated. The blades that struggled up were burnt away by the sun. The peasants have a proverb that you must never see the floor of your granary. But during the years of war and revolution all the reserves were used up. The Red Army had to be fed, and the towns too, and requisitions had depleted all stocks. Transport difficulties aggravated the situation. The railways are in a shocking state. Food got held up for weeks and the people fleeing from famine died by thousands waiting for trains at the railway stations. And it takes days to get food out to country districts by ox-waggon or sleigh. Then there was our intervention and blockade—that made everything twenty times worse. Nansen appealed in 1921 for international effort to relieve the famine, and funds were raised in a number of countries and food sent out."

The famine made painful hearing, and I was glad when a pretty grey-eyed girl got into our carriage. She looked like a heroine of a Turgeniev novel, for, though shabby, she had a kind of elegance and spoke French. She told us a little of her life. At first she had swept snow from the streets to earn her ration, but now she was working in an office. " It seemed hard at first," she said, " to have one room instead of sixteen, but it is only fair when housing is so short and it makes life simpler—less cleaning and fuss. What is the use of twenty dresses when you can't wear them one on top of another ? " I looked at her with curiosity. I

had met some Russians in exile and had been struck with one thing they had in common—a kind of reckless carelessness about possessions. Even when they had been rich they had squandered everything. If you gave them money to live on for a month, they blew it in one evening and starved the rest of the time. It was exasperating, but perhaps this unpossessiveness meant that communism had more hope of success in Russia than in our shopkeeping West.

We were only allowed one day in Moscow. This was tantalising. Moscow was startling—nothing I had seen was like it. Its blue domes with their golden stars, the high red wall of the Kremlin with the turmoil of towers and cupolas behind it—all this was so original and daring that I could almost understand Napoleon throwing away half a million men in his greed to possess it. Even the interior of the churches was unlike any other interior. The vaulted chapels of Basil the Blissful were like caves, one leading from the other. There was no open church. Some of them were black, except for the glow of a lamp burning under an ikon. They were like catacombs, filled with incense and flickering light.

It was clear that N.E.P. (the New Economic Policy which permitted private trade) was in force, although everyone still looked poor. Everywhere there were markets, crammed with people buying and selling and shouting and running over each other with carts and droshkes. The stalls were full of goods new in from Germany—it looked as if the Russo-German agreement about which Lloyd George had expressed alarm at the Genoa Conference was having some result. But there was no sign of the swaggering swindler-speculator-smuggler so prevalent in Vienna and Germany, and I wondered if that was because the Communists were keeping them in check, or if they were still to arise.

The journey to Buzuluk took three days in the train. Travelling over the steppe was like sailing over the sea—the same wide sky, the same monotony. It was not flat like Holland but undulating grassland with a few birch trees and pines, occasional log cabins, and sometimes a monastery with an inscrutable wall round it like a little Kremlin. The Volga looked like a huge lake. Its wide twists filled the plain up to the horizon, and on its shores was yellow sand. The rivers of my own country were mere trickles in comparison. We bought two tiny fish from it for a million roubles (about 8*d.*). Women were selling them already cooked at the stations each side of the river.

II. THE OUTPOST

Buzuluk was an unattractive place, with low wooden houses and wide streets. It was the head of the Buzuluk Department and the centre of the English Friends. The American Friends had a separate unit with their centre at Sorochenskoy, farther East.

I was allotted an outpost at Pasmorowka, a village twenty-five miles north of Buzuluk, across the Samarka river. I had four Volosts or rural districts in my area and about sixty villages or hamlets. In each village the peasants had chosen a Famine Committee from amongst themselves, to decide on the number of rations per family and distribute them monthly. The soup kitchens had been given up—people were strong enough now to cook at home. As administrator of the outpost I had to be a kind of tribunal—to look into complaints against the committees and get justice done if there had been favouritism. In my area there were eight orphanages, started with the help of the Friends, and these had to have regular visits of inspection and extra foods, like tinned milk and cocoa.

With me went an English girl, a gentle, uncomplaining creature. She had been a V.A.D. in a hospital and had been stamped on and crushed by harsh ward sisters for five years. She worked most of the time with quiet resignation, sorting and distributing the few clothes allotted us. She spoke no foreign languages. This made it difficult for her to communicate, not only with the Russians, but also with our interpreter, a German woman called Anna. Anna's husband, a Russian, had been bailiff on a large estate. She had a great scorn for the peasants—they were dirty, idle, brutish and ignorant, she told me. Her husband was dead and she had, of course, lost her property in the Revolution. She was an elderly woman, hard-working, conscientious, honest, thrifty. She had never had any grace or charm, and now, even her virtues seemed more like vices. Yet I owed a great debt to Anna. It was so painful to go about my district with her, and put me into such a wrong relationship with the people, that I set to work on the language with terrific energy, and after two months was able to go about alone. Serbian was a great help in this, but the Russians looked on it as a kind of miracle as I had not understood a word to begin with. It was useless to explain the secret of it to them. There was great rivalry among the retainers of one outpost and another, and when I found that my quick learning of Russian, faulty though it was, put up the stock of my two drivers and my

cook, I had to leave it at that. And indeed, even a bad Serb-Russian was better than none.

We lived in a log cabin belonging to Matvei and Natalia, peasants who were richer than any others of the village as they still had a horse and cow. They were kind to us and never complained of the extra work we gave them—their kitchen was always crammed with petitioners, they had not a square foot they could call their own, all the time we were there. But we gave them a certain prestige and power amongst their fellows, besides other more tangible titbits. They were ignorant and depressed and had something of the kulak spirit, and though I was grateful for their tolerance, I never grew very fond of them.

It did not take me long to see that the famine was still raging. The harvest of 1922 had been very poor, partly because of bad weather, but mainly because the peasants had been too weak to plough and sow in the spring, and had almost no horses. But fortunately I had come at a time when we were able to prevent people from dying of starvation.

All the same, I was appalled by the nakedness around me. I had not realised that a famine of the magnitude of 1921 meant not merely a famine of food but a famine of everything. When the Mission sent horses out to me so that I could get round my district, I sent word through the villages that I wanted to buy harness and reins for them. None were forthcoming. "But," I said indignantly, "as nearly all the horses were eaten last year—there must be plenty." "But you see," they explained, "the reins and harnesses were eaten too. That's why the people have so few sheep-skins and boots this year—nearly everything made of leather was either cut into strips and boiled for soup or bartered for bread in some far-off district." And then they all began to tell me in chorus what they had eaten the year before. They had ground bones for their bread and mixed it with sawdust, barks of trees and acorns—indeed in our district, which was near the forest, people had survived in greater numbers than on the steppe, because acorns were more nourishing than camel grass.

As soon as I knew enough Russian I visited all the cottages in the village where I lived and the neighbouring hamlets. Many were empty, for from a quarter to half the population of the district had died or fled to Tashkent, or wherever they hoped to find bread. Everywhere there was the extreme of poverty. Often there were only a few pumpkins left from the summer harvest. I found one family living in the stables. "Why are you here?" I

asked, astonished. "Why, darling," they said, "because last year, we ate our house." I was so used to horrors that I thought it was literally true, but they explained that they had sold their *izba* for flour. It was hewn down and burnt as firewood. The Americans told me that they kept themselves warm through the winter by burning thirty-five log cabins. In our district we were lucky as when winter came, we paid men with flour to cut down wood in the forest and bring it back to us on sleighs. In the houses I visited there was scarcely a stick of furniture—not a needle or pin, not a pencil or piece of paper. Scarcity had been great anyway, and everything that had existed had been sold for flour, or burnt by starving people who were too weak to look for wood.

The most depressing places were the children's orphanages. These were full of sickly, ragged children, who had nothing to do. Many of them were still listless: their stomachs were distended with famine dropsy: they had sores and skin diseases. The worst was that few of them had any hope of going out during the whole of the six months of winter because they had nothing on their feet but torn shoes and no coats except thin things from our warehouse.

Fortunately this was remediable. Our Unit was not allowed to spend money except on food, but I appealed to friends at home and they sent me out money enough to buy things for the eight orphanages—*valenkies* (felt boots), paper and pencils and ABC's so that they could have some schooling. And most important of all gifts (apart from food), the Australians sent tons of raw wool and we also had raw flax. Many of the orphan girls could spin this, and women of the villages wove it into cloth. There was extremely little to be bought in Buzuluk (the *valenkies* and pencils had come from Samara), but I found camel wool, and also dress-makers willing to live at the orphanages. They taught the girls to make the padded coats that, in default of sheepskins, made it possible for the children to go out.

I spent most of my time going round my district. I was so often accosted by people who complained that they were not on the list for rations or that only part of their household was, that I asked the Famine Committees to make me a Domesday Survey of all the families in their villages and the animals they possessed. They agreed to this with alacrity, and I was impressed with the care with which they carried it out. It was invaluable in helping to judge the fairness of distribution.

My tours of inspection often took four or five days. We stayed

at night at the peasant cottages. It rained throughout the autumn and these expeditions were a test of endurance. I was in the district of the black earth—the richest in the world. There is not a stone or pebble to be found in it. This means that the roads are like ploughed fields in the rainy season. We crawled along in our *tarantass* (a springless trap with seats for two behind the driver). Sometimes we found the river fords too swollen and had to go ten miles round to a bridge, or else there was a great rift, made by the melting snow. If I had not been learning Russian I should have been depressed, for Anna was not a gay travelling companion. I was seeing peasant Russia before the wind of the new regime had blown through it, as it had been for thousands of years, for what with wars, blockade, famine and bad communications, the New Russia had made little impression in the Buzuluk Province. After Serbia I was struck by its drabness. I wrote in my diary :—

" . . . the villages are dun-coloured and drab and so are the people. Everywhere are brown sheepskins, harsh homespuns made of the wool of black sheep, shirts grey from washing without soap. Inside the cottages there is the sickly stench of decaying pumpkins, old sheepskin wraps, goats, and unwashed, overcrowded human beings. The windows are all hermetically sealed. *Tarakans* swarm everywhere. These are something between a cockroach and a black beetle, and they get into the food and into the beds. Even Gorki's grandmother was afraid of them. 'I can't understand what they are made for,' she said to her grandson. 'All they do is to creep, creep, creep—all over the place. Good God has given every moth its task ; woodlouse is there to show that the place is damp, the bug that walls are unclean. But these beasts—*tarakani*—who can explain what kind of power is in them and what they come for ?' "

" This is Tsarist Russia all right," I said to myself, looking round. We had stopped at a peasant's cottage, for a *samovar* and warm-up, and the *tarakans* kept climbing over the bread and dropping into the tea, which was made of grated pumpkin rind. The familiar stench was round us, and a dirty old man was snoring on the top of the stove. Outside in the wind and the rain I got chilled to the bone, but I did not protect myself. I thought basely, " if I get bronchitis, perhaps I can go away to recover."

III. THE SNOW

The coming of the snow changed life in a magical manner. It coincided with two other things : my knowing enough of the

language to go about without Anna, and the arrival of Ilia to be my driver. Ilia turned up in Natalia's kitchen one morning. I thought he had come to complain that his rations had been short weight, but he said simply, " I've come to drive your horses. My wife is dead and my son is seventeen and can look after himself." " But Nikeefa drives me," I said. Nikeefa was a heavy, stolid peasant whom I called on when necessary. " Nikeefa has his family," Ilia said. " He can help me to look after the horses, but I will drive you about." Ilia was fair-haired, tall and wiry—a weather-beaten peasant about forty, alert, intelligent and gay, and with an intimate understanding and love of horses. And he was as kind to me as he was to them. I did not feel lonely any more after he had come.

The snow simplified everything. Instead of crawling along in the mud, we flew like birds over the white world. When the peasants saw me arriving with friendly Ilia instead of harsh Anna, they welcomed me warmly, confided their troubles to me, and told me their life stories. It was much cosier in the sleigh than in the *tarantass*. Ilia wrapt me up like a nurse, and there was room to take a camp bed in it so that at night I no longer needed to lie on the floor amongst the tarakans or on a narrow and draughty bench. Russia was not drab any more. I was amazed how much colour came with the snow. The distance was ultramarine as it had been in the Sahara—the sun set in a blaze, and the brown logs of the *izbas* in the villages made a fine contrast to the snow-covered roofs. The cupolas of the village churches, green, blue, silver or gold, gave a touch of glory to the scene.

I found people whom I liked amongst the peasants—old women who called me My Golden One or Little Apple, and looked at me with pitying eyes when I arrived at their cottage, blue and frozen after sundown, with the thermometer sometimes showing fifty-six degrees of frost. They rubbed my hands and feet with snow to prevent frostbite, as they murmured their endearments.

Once I stayed in the cottage of a Cossack girl with short hair and a bright, intelligent face. She told me that she had fought with her husband as a partisan in the Civil War and become a good shot. She had had typhus in the famine and nearly died, but when she was strong enough she had trekked down with her man to the Caspian Sea. There had not been much bread there but there was fish so they had survived. About a quarter of the people had died of typhus, she thought, but, of course, no one knew exactly. In the Russian famine, people died of hunger—

there were no doctors to tell them that they were dying of typhoid, dysentery or enteric because they had eaten foul food: of scurvy, beriberi or pellagra because of vitamin deficiencies. Typhus was usually apparent because of the high fever and red spots. (It has been estimated that ten million people had typhus and three million died of it between 1919 and 1922 in Russia.) "Why do they call it the hunger disease?" I asked Dr. Melville Mackenzie, who was working in Buzuluk with us. "It should be called a dirt disease really." "A famine is not only a famine of food," he said, "but of soap, and often of fuel for heating water. And people grow so weak with hunger that they lose the spirit to fight dirt." Ilia told me that the Russians say that lice come with brooding.

At one cottage where we stopped I was shocked by a loud wailing that came from near the ceiling. I looked up and saw a girl lying on top of the stove. She had a pale face, fine grey eyes and long black hair. There was one sentence she kept repeating over and over again—"it was my own child, my own child—I didn't know, I didn't know." The wildness of her voice and the suffering of her face were very painful, but the grandmother, who was helping us to prepare our meal, said in an indifferent voice, "she'll stop soon. She carries on like that from time to time. She went mad in the famine and she believes that she ate her own child. But she never had a child. She is only sixteen now."

Whether there had been actual cases of cannibalism during the famine, I do not know. People told me stories of it in horrified whispers in several places where I spent the night. It is natural that civilisation should dissolve when millions are dying of starvation, but it seemed from the horror the infringement of it evoked that the cannibalism taboo had remained, although it was clear that it had been present everywhere to the mind, intensely repugnant and at the same time attractive. I was often told stories of missing children. "And where is the little girl, granny, who used to cry all day for bread?" . . . "And how did you bury her in the courtyard, granny, when the frost has frozen it harder than steel?" They were like the tales of ogres and witches, mankind's memories of its hideous cannibal past, but it was the ambivalence of the emotions they aroused that impressed me. There was something in it of what Gilbert Murray alludes to in his "Rise of Greek Epic" as humanity's *nostalgie de la boue*, home-sickness for the swamp from which it has—so recently—emerged, but there was horror as well as home-sickness.

I found peasants prostrate with malaria in my district. This had never existed in the Buzuluk area before, though there were plenty of mosquitoes. It had been brought back by the people who had fled to Tashkent for bread and then returned. They had infected the mosquitoes and added a new problem to the district. I was surprised that there were so many fresh cases in the winter, but Dr. Mackenzie explained that this was because of the almost tropical heat of the peasants' huts. " Most of them have water butts in their houses," he said, " and they make a wonderful breeding place for the mosquitoes left over from the summer." He gave me quinine, and I soon had patients from far and wide who came to me regularly. It was impressive to see them recovering before my eyes. A man in my village who had lain in bed for three months was walking about in a few days.

The people were very grateful for the help that was brought them. When they thanked me, I used to say, " when we have a famine in England, you will come to us and bring us bread." That pleased them, and they said, " yes, we will be rich one day, for our earth is the best in the world, when the sun does not scorch it. And they will grow flax in the Ukraine again—now the fields have been changed to wheat and rye—and we will bring you fine white linen."

We had a few clothes for distribution. I sent out word that I would give to orphans if they brought certificates signed by the village Soviet. There were so many, we were overwhelmed, and I had to insist that clothes were only for round orphans, as the Russians call them, when both parents have died. Then bearded men came to my door and old grandmothers. They were round orphans, they explained. Sometimes they walked all night through the snow. It was very complicated. Relief workers have to have hard hearts. If I made one exception, the whole courtyard was full of similar exceptions the next day and poor Natalia's kitchen flooded out.

Christmas was a lovely time because my American friend Dorothy North gave me hundreds of utility bags that had been prepared for American soldiers and not needed. They were full of treasures—safety-pins, needles, buttons, cotton-bobbins, mirrors, combs, tooth-brushes and mouth-organs, even pocket knives with a spoon at one end. We split them up and made more bags out of torn dresses till we had enough presents for all the children of our village, the neighbouring hamlets and the orphanages. For a long time afterwards little girls used to pass

our cottage singing loudly, their bosoms plastered with safety-pins and wearing bracelets and ear-rings made of buttons. I gave our retainers a little of everything except the tooth-brushes. They were hurt about that, and Ilia asked me if they couldn't have one to share round in the kitchen.

February was the wintriest time of all, and once I was out in a blizzard for four days in succession. It was like going back to chaos. There was no sky; and no landmarks. Everything was dissolved. There were just interminable flakes of dirty white falling across each other without any purpose or direction, against a sickly yellow twilight. There were no sticks to show the roads. You could only tell these by the tracks of the sleighs and these disappeared the instant the sleigh had passed. "We've gone back a stage," I thought, "we're somewhere before the creation of time or of the world." I was jerked back to reality by a sudden lurch. I didn't know what had happened and all I could see were the four ears of our horses, sticking out of the snow. "It's all right, Francesca Robertovna," Ilia comforted me, and he was out in a moment, up to his waist in a snowdrift. The road had completely disappeared. I had heard lots of stories of people freezing to death, lost in snowdrifts, and night was coming on. But Ilia called to me from the distance—and to the horses—he was more worried about them than about me or himself. They were perfectly contented to be buried in snow, and it was with great difficulty that Ilia hauled them out when at last he found the road again. In the end we turned up in a village we had never heard of. This was quite a different type of village from all those I had visited so far. It was a Little Russian settlement, founded in 1905 at the time of the abortive revolution that had been precipitated by the disillusion caused by the Russo-Japanese war. The Ukrainians had been given land in the Black Earth district because they had expressed their discontent by wide-spread riots. The land-hunger of the half-starved peasants was something even the Tsarist regime could not ignore. It reminded me of Aksakoff's autobiography.

The style of this village was different from the others of the district. The houses were built of red mud brick instead of logs, but they looked neat and trim. To get to the living-rooms, one passed first through the stable; the Little Russians wanted their beasts to have warmth from the house, and peeped through a window at night to see that they were all right and not stolen. They were much better off than the Great Russians, for they had

more advanced methods of cultivating their land. Ilia said that they were grasping, but I thought that that was probably Great Russian jealousy. They took us out to a wedding party. The bridal pair were sitting stiff and uncomfortable on benches watching their guests dancing. It was remarkable seeing heavy peasant women, as round as barrels, whirling round with perfect precision and lightness, and the young men performing as though they had been trained for the ballet.

I did not like driving round in a blizzard, but it was much less painful than another form of snowstorm—one that does not come from the sky at all but is the snow underneath boiling up and lashing you in the face. It comes with strong wind and is blinding and cruel, especially for the horses and the driver. At intervals you catch sight of the blue sky and the sun, so that you have not the gloom of the yellow, twilight world as in a blizzard, but the cold is bitter.

I had an adventure on the steppes that gave me a certain prestige: I met a wolf. We were in the middle of the lonely steppe when I noticed a tawny white animal in front of us. "Ilia," I said, "ya dumaiyu volk" (I think—wolf). "And I also think wolf," he replied, his eyes shining. Every Russian is a hunter, and Ilia lashed the horses, hoping to catch it up. "Holy Mother of God," he said, forgetting in his excitement that he no longer believed in her, for the Revolution freed him of what was to him only a pretence. "If only I had a gun." The wolf left the road, ran to the right, stopped and looked at us. Then it began to follow us slowly at a safe distance. Ilia got more and more excited, reined in the horses and whistled to it. I think he thought he might kill it with the combined knife and spoon that he had had for Christmas. It came nearer and I had a tickle in my heart. It had a cruel, thin face and a black spot on its nose, but it was nearly white and had splendid thick fur—it was far handsomer than I had imagined. Then suddenly a black dog appeared on the horizon behind us—the wolf turned round and flew after it. The dog barked in anguish and Ilia cracked his whip, whistled and shouted. The wolf stopped, confused—then decided for us. "Don't you think we might perhaps drive on?" I suggested, shamefacedly. I thought—"perhaps the wolf is mad and will attack us, even though we look so formidable sitting upright in our sheepskins, with our two big horses in front." For no sane wolf, I knew, would attempt a fight four against one. Ilia drove on sadly. The wolf followed us for twenty minutes until we got to a village, then disappeared.

The other relief workers were jealous of my wolf. They had spent all night out lost in blizzards and had had all sorts of adventures, but none of them had been followed by wolves. And yet wherever one went there were stories of them. The truth was that there were not many about, although during seven years of war one would have expected them to have increased. Two peasant lads brought a dead one for me to see soon after this. They had been driving through the forest at night, they told me, and were followed by this wolf. They weren't worried, knowing that wolves don't attack alone, but suddenly he sprang at them, biting their legs and trying to leap into their sleigh. They stopped the horse. One of them held down the wolf with his foot while the other strangled it with the reins (they had no arms). Now they spent their lives in terror because they thought the wolf must have been mad, and they were afraid they would develop rabies. They could not be sure of this for another six months. I begged them to go to Samara where there was an institute for the treatment of hydrophobia—but Samara to them seemed the ends of the earth. I never heard what happened to them.

Russia had always been connected in my mind with wolves; the most exciting stories I had read as a child were of wolves following fleeing sleighs over the steppe and people throwing out babies to them. Wolves, samovars, ikons, steppes, bearded peasants stamping the snow off their boots and crossing themselves —what a miserable little handful of impressions we had in those old days of Holy Russia, and how rich they have become now after twenty-five years of Soviet rule. But it was still 1922, the time of the famine, and of N.E.P., and I had to be content with the nineteenth century. I bought a wolfskin at last. A red-haired peasant with a tilted nose and very blue eyes brought it in triumph into Natalia's courtyard. "I was standing at dusk at the door of my *izba*," he said, "when I saw him go past. I was afraid of losing him. I took my gun and called a friend. We went out in our sheepskins. The wolf had walked to the top of the hill by this time, but my comrade fell on all fours and crawled towards him. The wolf smelt the sheepskin, turned and ran towards him. I shot him—and here he is."

IV. THE NEW REGIME IN THE PROVINCES

Though there was a great deal of propaganda against religion, it surprised me that there was no real persecution; we

had heard so much about this in England. I wrote to *The Daily News* :—

> " It is remarkable that religious toleration is so great. One has only to recall the iconoclasm of the Puritan Revolution to be astonished at the mildness of the Bolsheviks. True, priests and monks were killed at the beginning of the Revolution, but so were other landowners and members of the bourgeoisie. True also that churches are now taxed like other public buildings and the priests have to be supported by the people, but this is the logical result of the separation of church and state. The priests go about their religious duties unmolested and the churches have never been fuller. The wives and daughters of the priests teach in the village schools. There was commotion one day in my village. Vakrulin, an official, had come into the school and ordered the children to remove their crosses, and the peasant woman, in whose house the school was held, to throw away her ikons. A few days later an order came from the Provincial Board of Education that the people were not to be disturbed in their faith."

But religion as I saw it in the villages was purely formal. It was magic : you wore a cross and prayed to your ikon to placate the Unknown. You paid the priest to sprinkle you with holy water, just as you paid the cobbler to mend your shoes. Natalia and Agafia (my cook) were both of them pious, or at least superstitious, but they delighted to tell stories against the priests. Agafia told me, shaking her fists at the memory, how the priest had left the coffin with her grandmother in the snow, because they had not had the kopeks to pay for her burial. Certainly " Holy Russia " had not been kind to Agafia. Her three children had all died of smallpox without any doctoring, and her husband had fallen in the Great War. She was illiterate but bright and intelligent. She had come into our kitchen one morning and announced that she was going to cook for us, and stayed ever after. She had dancing brown eyes and a warm nature, though she was outspoken and expressed her criticism freely. This was characteristic of Russians ; it was much healthier, I thought, than our false politeness and fear of hurting people's feelings. She worked hard for us ; the well from which all our drinking water was brought was half a mile away and, adopting Russian standards of hospitality, we fed everybody who came to us from a distance, so that she had to bake bread every day. Our food was simple, of the bully beef

and batter type, but we had some potatoes from a Malakan, who lived near. The Malakans were a religious sect who were pacifist and vegetarian, and they grew good vegetables. In the famine area the Government very sensibly did not force these people to do military service, as they were excellent agriculturalists. Round Moscow some of them had been shot or imprisoned.

I was much impressed by the amount of help the Russian Government was giving to us in our work. I wrote to my brother in answer to an inquiry . . . " they pay the greater part of the overhead expenses of the Mission—all the transport, the rent, heating and light of our houses, the hay for our horses and the wages of our interpreters : an enormous bill. It only cost me £5 to go from London to Buzuluk, partly because of the fall of the German mark, but mainly because I travelled free through Russia. The travelling and transport are especially expensive. Yet the Government is not rich." We had never been treated as generously as this in other relief work, and it meant that there was more to spend on food for the starving. Moreover the food stores were very well guarded : there was practically no theft on the railway.

I wanted very much to talk to Communist leaders and to understand the ideals for which they were working. I had come to Russia with a secret hope that I would find a new way of life there and a new faith. But there were few signs of these in the Buzuluk area, partly because of its naked poverty, and yet more because of its remoteness from the centre. There were Communist officials in charge of each Volost and of the orphanages, but there were few schools, and such as there were had no materials except a blackboard, not even paper or pencils. Sometimes there was no blackboard and they used the stove. Moreover the officials changed very frequently, there were many dismissals for slackness or dishonesty. But one day the President of the neighbouring Volost came to see me. He was tall and fair-haired and had a look of character and energy. He had been a partisan in the Civil War, I was told. I could imagine him a hero. We discussed the problem of a big orphanage he had in his Volost. He said he was worried about it : he wanted the children to grow up with the idea of building a new Russia and playing their part in a great movement, but they were lacking everything, and bricks could not be made without straw. He said he could give them land and seed, but how could they plough ? I said that I would get Quaker horses assigned to them. (Ralph Fox and the others had recently

come back from Turkestan. They had bought nearly two thousand horses and were distributing them to the peasants.) His eyes flashed with joy. That was the greatest need. He would send an agricultural specialist to the orphanage: they could plough their own land and sow it, and learn to work together for heir community. He told me of the ideals of the Revolution, and what they were planning to do, above all for the children. I was much elated by this talk. He promised to draw up a scheme and let me have it in a few days. As I did not hear from him for more than a week, I drove over to the head town of his Volost. But when I got to his office I found a new President in charge. My friend had been dismissed for stealing potatoes belonging to the community. He had been sent back to the army as a disciplinary measure.

V. TALKS WITH COMMUNISTS, AMERICAN AND ENGLISH

I visited the sister Unit soon after this and had a long talk with D., an American communist who was working at Sorochenskoy. I told him of my disappointing experiences and said: "I agree with you that the ideals behind communism are magnificent, but Russia is so backward and has such a tradition of corruption, do you think they will find the people to carry them out?" "Well, after all," he said, "what force the movement has, even in these remote and backward provinces! In the old days a corrupt official was never removed—he stayed on for ever. Your friend stole the community potatoes. Last year, you know, a few potatoes meant the difference between life and death, and this year isn't much better. The temptation is terrific. And this guy has probably been through the Great War and the Civil War and the famine, it's not the same for him as it is for your town clerks in Bermondsey, say, or St. Pancras. But he's a Party man, ordinary folk have very light punishment for theft: they are only severe with communists. Back he goes into the ranks of the army. He'll get educated in time. They'll find their people in the end, but they can't do it in a day. They haven't started on this part yet. We're about as remote from the centre here as Nigeria is from London, and when they take the bridges away and the spring floods come, you'll be cut off even from Buzuluk for about two months." "I hope that you are right," I said, "but I am appalled by the problems that have to be tackled. Everywhere I find the peasants living in squalor and filth, worse than their beasts. And they don't like the new regime, though they don't

want to go back to the Tsarist days either. 'What, have the landlords back again?' they shout—and then they tell you of some count who owned dozens of square miles and had a thousand landless men working for him." "That's it," he said, "they're poor still, but they have hope and they had none before."

There were other things that worried me. The felt boots and pencils I had bought at Samara were of very poor quality and hadn't lasted. Didn't that mean that the socialising of industry wasn't working? "Why, woman," he cried. "Have you never heard of the Allies' blockade? Don't you realise that Russia has been artificially starved of raw materials, and the machinery she needs so badly for her new factories? First there was the intervention and then the blockade. We have done all we could to break the Revolution and still it survives. Get rid of your bourgeois prejudices and you'll understand things better." "I don't know about bourgeois prejudices," I said, "I enjoy the classless side of life here very much. I find it a great relief. I like hugging Agafia and dancing round the kitchen with her. I loathe and despise the snobbishness of England and our artificial class distinctions, which are quite the worst in the world. I lived with peasants most of the time in Serbia, you know." "Well, they were picturesque perhaps. You should live in the slums of London." I could see that he thought me hopeless, but I was inspired by his enthusiasm and faith. "If Russia has plenty of people like you," I said, "they'll be able to build their new world." "Like me," he said, shocked, "why the people here are a hundred times better than me. Look what they've stood up to. You should talk to some of the folk in Moscow. Their conviction burns everything before it."

We used to have conferences at Buzuluk once a month and discuss our problems. We were a strange jumble of people. It was probably difficult to find workers at that time—certainly several had no obvious qualifications for the job. There were some vague Tolstoyans of the garden-city type—Russia had naturally attracted them, and if they were honest with themselves had certainly disappointed. Here and there, there was an energetic dynamic personality whom the wild and lonely life well suited.

Amongst the men Ralph Fox stood out. He looked extraordinarily living against that background of uncertain personalities. He had recently come back from what was then the greatest adventure of his life, the buying of horses in Turkestan. He was

twenty-two—intelligent, imaginative and daring—and he had wrung the last drop out of that strange and difficult experience. He had lived in the black tents of the Nomad Kirghiz, bargained with the wily Kasaks, and, half dead with fever had scoured the great Asiatic plains on horseback, experiencing in his bones the truth of their proverb "the steppe is cruel and heaven is far." Sometimes he had had an Anglo-Saxon, English or American, as his companion, but he was usually alone with an interpreter. He had had a strange collection of these: a Russian who had come back from America because he thought that the Bolsheviks were abolishing work, a Pole who had come because he thought that they were making everybody good, and, best of all, a grandson of Tolstoy, a great hunter, dashing and adventurous.

The stories he told of the wandering tribes he had learnt to know did not sound incredible in that south-east corner of Russia where we were living. Asia we had seen in many of the villages and market places—for Asia had boiled over and leaked into the Buzuluk area. There were villages with minarets where Tartars lived: Tartars with high cheek-bones, black beards and sly, slit eyes. There were Bashkirs who still had their women veiled. I had come across Chuvashes, dressed in bright clothes and speaking an unknown tongue, and Modvars, whose language, they told me, had never yet been written down. But these, it was said, were related to the Finns and had been in Europe longer than the memory of man. What part were these races to have in the new Russia? When Ralph Fox told us that the peoples of the Asiatic steppes were the spoiled children of the Bolsheviks, that books were already being printed in their languages and schools set up, I thought that enthusiasm had carried him away. But in fact the great process had already begun: the granting of cultural autonomy to the scores of racial minorities in Asiatic and European Russia, which has been such an impressive aspect of Soviet rule and such a lesson to Europe—and the world.

He had seen the effect of the New Economic Policy while bargaining for horses in the market places. Greed was raising its head again, speculators were making their little fortunes over night, dishonest merchants were battening on famine like the kites and vultures in Vienna, but he believed that this was only a temporary phenomenon, and that the Communists would be strong enough one day to suppress what ruin had forced them to allow. And one thing was to the good. It helped the Party to get rid of their scum, and scum there was in plenty, he said, for

the banner of revolution attracted the worst elements in the country as well as the best. No Party member was allowed to do private trade, and many whom the new wealth tempted resigned of their own accord.

" And, of course, N.E.P. was inevitable, I know," he added. " The peasants seized the land at the Revolution and became little capitalists overnight. They would not give up what they had just got and be socialised; they are ignorant and without ideals, it is only natural. They were holding up grain and would have starved the cities out. Lenin is a realist: he took a step backwards so that all should not be lost. It is disappointing, of course, but I hope, I believe indeed, that it will come all right."

VI. AMERICANS IN RUSSIA

I was alarmed at the thought of being cut off from Buzuluk for two months. People told me that the floods were so great that it was difficult to get even from one village to another. There were plenty of helpers by this time. My American friend of Vienna days, Dorothy North, had been hard at it for nearly a year with the Sorochenskoy Unit and was going home. I decided to leave with her and to spend some time in Moscow seeing what I could there. The ice was making ominous creakings—I wasn't even sure whether I should get across the river to Buzuluk in time.

I had often dug up stakes and moved on in my life, but this time it was more than usually harrowing saying good-bye, especially to Agafia and Ilia. For days before I left, Ilia went about saying, " and you'll never come back any more. No, no, Francesca Robertovna, it's useless to make promises. You'll never come back any more." It sounded like a dirge.

We whiled away the three days' journey to Moscow sleeping, making tea, and telling each other our adventures and impressions. " Why did you leave Vienna, Dorothy ? " I asked. " We missed you there so very much."

" Why," she said, " I was just crazy about Austria and the Unit there, but my work had come to an end. They said to me at the Quaker Centre in Philadelphia, ' you've had your turn, you ought to give other people a chance now.' And Americans kept coming and coming and I just felt a fifth wheel."

" I know," I said. " The Friends feel that to do relief work abroad gives people international experience. They look on it rather like a scholarship for foreign travel. If they choose them well and keep a nucleus of the old gang going, it's all right, I

expect. But now tell me about everything from the beginning. Not about the famine—I know all that, but just your personal impressions."

"Well," she said, "Sorochenskoy was just awful when I hit it at the end of May. I missed the spring. Everybody told me about it. They said it was intoxicating when the snows went. The flowers came rushing out, there were sheets of lilies of the valley, and the nightingales sang all night, and then in a moment it was all over. When I came it was summer, and I'll never forget the melancholy of that flat, dusty steppe and the heat and the flies. Sorochenskoy was like the worst of our Kansas towns—just immensely wide streets with low wooden houses each side, and not a tree in the whole place, and no colour anywhere. Gosh—I'll never forget it. The desolation : it weighed on you. There was a river, but it was forty feet lower than the town and you couldn't see it unless you were on it, and then you couldn't see it for the mosquitoes. And in spite of the famine, the village boys and girls used to go on it with their *balalaikas*. All the melancholy evening—and it was never dark bar a couple of hours—we could hear them reminding us that they had lovers and we had none. They were eaten by mosquitoes, but never mind. I admired their vitality. The only place we had to sit outdoors was on the heap of dirty straw they had taken out of the ice house. And never a spot of shade. I thought I'd lose my mind. One of our girls came out and she took one look and said, "I know when I've made a mistake, send me back," but she made good in the end. They kept me in Sorochenskoy, sorting clothes. My—it was as near hell as I want to be. There was such a desperate need of things and so little that was suitable. We never had your raw flax and wool. And we had thousands of baby clothes when nearly every baby had died.

"Well, I did time there all through that burning summer. Our boys did good work. They had tractors and they did twenty-four-hour days, ploughing by lantern light the few hours of darkness, and they trained the peasants, but it was hard going. But the Russians were all crazy for tractors, though they didn't know how to handle a machine. But it was a sight to see them in the fields. The old men who had lain on the stove all winter, spitting out sunflower seeds (they'd had scarcely anything else to eat) worked eighteen hours and slept where they were, in the fields. It made you understand how the Red Army had won the Civil War. I'd never seen, I'd never conceived such strength.

" In the fall I went to an outpost at Grachevka—when I came back from there I was made over. I had had an intimate contact with the people and I had had Dimitri, the best interpreter in the whole outfit. His father had been on the *Potemkin* when it mutinied in 1905, and then he'd gone off to Canada with his family. And Dimitri had had a good education—he was tall and handsome, everybody was crazy about him and he had a real good judgment. And I had a cook, Sonia. She was lean and tall, and had wonderful brown eyes. She had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem—she hadn't any money, and she'd walked all the way to the Black Sea, she'd been shipwrecked, and she'd lain out in the open. And at Christmas she lit the candles and burnt the incense she'd got at Jerusalem.

" We'd got a deal of food by this time. The price was breaking in America and Congress had bought it up and sent it out—so we could offer double rations for public works. We had one fine Communist in Grachevka—an ex-navy man, and he had all the folks working, women as well as men, making dams on the eroded gullies, so that they could have pools for the cattle in the summer, else they'd die of thirst. And he got a night school going for the adults—and they were spelling and writing at one end of the room, and figuring at the other. And we gave them pencils—good capitalist pencils out of the American boys' comfort bags. The peasants gave rye to support the school."

" We got ours to work for the single ration, poor things," I said. " They hauled wood and the women wove cloth for the children's homes, and said it reminded them of the days of the serfs."

" There were lots of Bashkir settlements near us in Grachevka," Dorothy went on. " We hadn't been feeding them, but they just showed us the little handful of grain they had left, so I agitated and ran round till it was decided to feed them too. But they were semi-nomads still and only the Mullah could read, and they wouldn't send any transport, and no one would show up when we were all ready for them; they just went haywire. We got the food to them at last, but they were awfully undisciplined. And say, did you have any German villages in your district? I had several in mine. The streets were tree-lined, you couldn't mistake them. And their barns were lofty and ventilated like our prairie barns, and the cattle and horses were twice as big as the Russian ones and none of them had died in the famine. Catherine the Great had brought them in to teach the Russians, but they just looked down on them and wouldn't even learn Russian. They

had their tight little German culture, they were just like oil and water. They were hard and grasping. They had all sorts of privileges, didn't have to serve in the army and had their own schools and churches. If there were a war I don't believe they'd lift a finger for Russia."

"You had some very good people in your Unit," I said.

"Well, we had all sorts," she said. "There were some that were very uncompromising: they wanted things done their way, or they just deadlocked. There was one couple who had toilets on the brain, and wherever they went toilets sprang up like crosses on a pilgrim's way. But they were never emptied so the last state was worse than the first. You've got to be adaptable when you do relief work.

"The worst of Americans is that we're poor linguists and no one tells us that we ought to pitch in and learn the language. Look at us in Vienna—how few spoke German or got below the surface of Austrian life. We were worse than you English. But some at Sorochenskoy learnt Russian and were genuinely interested."

"I think," I said, "it's because you are so used to people coming into your country and learning your language. You get spoilt. Of course you do things on a colossal scale. Look at your Hoover Relief in Belgium and Central Europe and your A.R.A. here. Our relief is a flea-bite in comparison. As a rule there's no question of individual work for you. But where there is, it's a pity not to know languages!"

"I'll say it's a pity," she said, looking at me with her shrewd, forget-me-not eyes. I thought, "this woman has all that is best in the Americans: their lack of sophistication, their response, their enthusiasm and kindness and good horse sense."

A compatriot of Dorothy's got into our carriage at Samara. He said we wouldn't know ourselves when we got back home. We could lie in bed and clap a thing on to our ears and hear the finest opera in the world, and we wouldn't need to read newspapers any more—he was going to be done out of his job—because it would speak the news into our ears too. "Really," I thought, "Americans are the most buoyant and stimulating people, but their imaginations run wild at times."

VII. MOSCOW

While we were in Moscow we went over the Trekhgorka Manufaktura, the largest of the textile works in Moscow. There were

five thousand workers in the factory at that time. The wages for women were the same as for men, as they were all over Russia. There was an admirable crèche for the workers' children in the house of the former employers. The women with small babies were given free time twice during work hours to feed their infants; they looked so little like factory hands in their white overalls that I mistook them for wet nurses. Had I known it, this was only the beginning of a vast network of nursery schools that was to spring up all over the Soviet Union, embracing even the nomad Kirghiz and the ignorant Modvars and Chuvashes. The Russians were going to get over the problem of distance, so disturbing in England, by making a law that no new factory or collective farm might spring up without having a nursery school or crèche attached to it.

I was still more delighted with the colony at Pushkin, a summer resort in the forest, twenty miles outside Moscow. The boys and girls of this home were all children of workers and peasants, many of them orphans. There were sixty-four of them from eight to sixteen, and they had all been chosen because of their musical talent. The head of the colony was a musician who had been chief flautist in the orchestra of the Moscow opera; his wife had been an opera singer. We arrived at the Home in the late afternoon. The director and his wife were out, but we were received by two of the teachers and the children: they decided to give us a concert and entertain us by themselves. Their orchestra was made up of violins, 'cellos, flutes and piano, and they played us selections from the ballet of the Hunchback Horse, and Russian folk songs. They had no conductor, so the first violin, a firm little chap aged twelve with a broad peasant face leapt to his feet at intervals and shouted "raz, dva." The performance was remarkably good. Then a chorus of children sang us the prelude of Romeo and Juliet accompanied by the orchestra. Later four bare-footed girls danced a butterfly dance they had invented themselves, and the boys gave us some Cossack dances that were full of dash and temperament.

I talked a long time to an apple-cheeked girl of fifteen, the secretary of the children's soviet. There were seven of them elected by the others and holding office for three months. They appointed orderlies for all the daily duties: weeding the garden, chopping wood, bringing water and cleaning, for all the work of the house, except the cooking and laundry, was done by the children, and they grew their own vegetables. There was a special

orderly for each day who had to see that the others did their duty, and reported them to the children's conference if not. The worst punishment was to prevent a child from going to see his friends or relatives. The Soviet arranged concerts and plays for the visitors ; parents were encouraged to come out to the Home whenever they could, and were urged to attend the lessons.

They learnt all the usual subjects taught in secondary schools : mathematics, French and German, and so on, but music was more of a feature than in ordinary schools.

When the director and his wife came back they were loudly applauded by the children, who begged them to play and sing to us. This they did with great accomplishment and charm. Then the children brought us soup and meat pies and sat down to eat with us although it was past ten o'clock. After this they cleared the tables and made up beds for us on them and disappeared noiselessly to sleep.

The director was a very attractive man, cultivated, vivacious, and with the courtly manners of the old regime. He seemed to belong so much to another era that I thought he must miss it, but he said that he found his work with the children extremely worth while and that he wouldn't go back to his old life. The most talented of his children, he thought, would be taken to play in orchestras or trained as teachers, but most of them would go into factories or on to the land. In this way music would permeate ordinary life much more than in the past. It reminded me of Cizek's idea about teaching children art. " Musical instruments and pianos have always been outside the range of the poor until now, and a terrible lot of talent has run to waste. Now we shall tap all that, and the gain to our country will be enormous. I have always loved children," he added, " especially the unspoilt children of the proletariate and peasants. This summer we are all going to the Crimea for a holiday. The Crimea, you know, is like the Riviera, only much more untouched and exquisite. How we are going, I don't know—we have no money. But go we will—that is certain."

The director's confidence made me realise once more the new hope that had been born in Russia. It seemed as though to their minds nothing was going to be impossible any more.

The consciousness of all the musical talent we are losing in England, though we can so ill spare it, filled me with rage, and I wrote to *The Manchester Guardian* suggesting (in vain) that the Pushkin colony experiment should be tried in our country. Sing-

ing is the only music subject in our elementary schools; the voice costs nothing, but pianos and musical instruments, as the director said, are expensive and boarding schools worse still—too expensive for England.

In the meantime Russia has gone on collecting her musical children until there are many thousands of them in specialised schools all over the Union. They have won international honours in competitions, and raised the standard of musical performance throughout the country.

VIII. TALKS WITH OLGA TOLSTOY AND A RUSSIAN LECTURER

In Moscow I went to see the daughter-in-law of Tolstoy. She was very interesting, though she looked rather like a Victorian governess, she was dressed in such a plain, old-fashioned way. She had lived in England, but said she hadn't liked it. "I couldn't get used to the parlour-maids going about so silently on the softly padded floors," she said, "and the coachman who came to meet us when we arrived and looked so remote and unapproachable, sitting on his box. And tea always at half-past four and everything so formal and polite and rigid. I wanted to break something—to knock the coachman's hat off or take the parlour-maid for a dance, or run into the kitchen to chat to the cook. We were supposed to be 'gentlefolk,' as the English say, because we had titles, but life in Russia was much more natural and informal than with you.

"Yes," she said, in answer to my question. "I used to live in the house of my father-in-law. He had the most penetrating eyes I have ever seen. You felt that he was looking right into you and reading everything you wanted most to hide. I was not happy with my husband, who, like most of Tolstoy's sons, was a very wild young man, and sometimes I slept badly. He always remarked on it when I came to breakfast. There were a great many of us all living together in a patriarchal manner. Tolstoy went out riding a good deal and did not talk very much at meals, but there was something rather terrifying about his all-seeing eyes and the sudden way he would say—'you've got a new blouse on,' or 'that colour doesn't suit you,' or 'you've been crying.'"

She said that the fall of the Tsars had been hailed with the wildest enthusiasm. For two nights no one had slept in Moscow; they just went round, hugging and kissing each other and crying for joy. No one could understand the atmosphere of that time who had not lived through the Rasputin era, with its squalid cor-

ruption. The anarchy and chaos had become unbearable. After the first ecstasy came the shock of disappointment. Her cook had said to her—" now the war will be over "—but it wasn't. Kerensky and his colleagues insisted on carrying it on, but none of the Russian workers and peasants knew what it was about; they only knew that they were fighting without arms, and later on without even boots and overcoats. Even at the beginning half the regiments were sent off without guns and told to pick them up from the dead.

I had been able to buy in the Buzuluk market quite a number of tattered classics. In England I had especially enjoyed Dostoievski, but in Russia Tolstoy was a much greater delight, for in many of his tales, and all the peasant sections of his books, he was describing the world I was living in. I did not meet educated Russians with whom I could discuss these things in the Buzuluk area, but in Moscow I was introduced to Boris, a young university lecturer, who had an excellent command of English and a great interest in our literature as well as in his own.

We sat in the corner of a *chainaya*, a tea-tavern, drinking a pale yellow concoction that called itself tea. There was no *samovar*, only a little white teapot (standing on the top of a huge one, full of steaming water to keep it hot and replenish it), from which we helped ourselves at intervals. Boris was smoking *mahorka*, the strong-smelling weed that grows on the Volga, and every now and then he tore a corner off a manuscript he had been writing and rolled himself a cigarette. He had the high cheek-bones, the wavy yellowish hair, broad shoulders and massive frame of the typical Russian, but he was lean and pale from privation and still lame from war-wounds. He had the restless eyes and abstracted look of one who, though by nature a man of action, lives mainly in the world of ideas. I had been told that he took little part in politics. Our place of meeting was like the *chainaya* where Ivan and Alyosha had had their famous sticky-leaves-in-spring talk (except that there was no cherry jam).

" Russian drama has never been remarkable," he said, " but our novels are much better than the English. Your novels suffer from your famous sense of humour. In Fielding, already, nothing is told in a clear straightforward manner; there is always something facetious wedged in. Dickens is ruined too by this lumbering, clumsy effort to be funny and at another moment he is greasy with sentiment." " And yet," I said, " he survives, because of his enormous vitality." " I admit," he said, " that I

have a happy memory of 'David Copperfield,' but I could not reread it. Jane Austen is good. She is completely free of sentimentality. She is cool and detached and her humour is dry and pleasing. She is of course extremely limited. Birth and death play no part in her world—except for their social consequences. Shaw is not facetious. He has genuine wit—he is full of graceful leaps and sudden surprises. But to come to the Russians. Dostoievsky is very remarkable, but I dislike him intensely. He is very Russian of course. We all of us have in us the three brothers Karamazov, though I confess I have never detected much of Alyosha in myself. Mitya—yes, a great deal and Ivan too, I hope, though he was no more a human being than Alyosha. Of course it's a murder story: a first-rate thriller, though too long. The 'Possessed' is the most remarkable of Dostoievsky's books. But I hate them all and will fight them to the end. They are too near myself. Every Russian is on the side either of Dostoievsky or of Tolstoy; he can't be both, and I am for Tolstoy."

"And what about Nietzsche's saying," I interrupted, "that a man must have chaos in himself before he can give birth to a star. Doesn't that apply to Dostoievsky?" "But Dostoievsky did not get as far as the star, and Tolstoy did. A star describes his work very well; steady and clear. He understood humanity because he realised its limitations. He saw everything, but he remained outside. He did not lose himself. I am not thinking of his senile philosophy, about the 'Sermon on the Mount' and 'What is Art' and so on. He always had a Puritan conscience gnawing at him, even in his best time. You can see that in his Levin and Pierre, and the hero of 'Resurrection'—detestable people, boring and ridiculous. They are all projections of Tolstoy's bad conscience. His attitude to Napoleon is interesting and in advance of his day, but it is too negative. Tolstoy saw that the great man is not independent of his epoch, he knew that there were hundreds of little Napoleons in the past, who perished unknown because the time was not ripe for them, but he did not understand how the great man may tip the balance of events when the moment is propitious for him, how immensely important he can be. Look at Lenin. He has certainly altered the course of history.

"Tchekov's short stories are delightful, but his plays are detestable. How can the English enjoy this quintessence of futility! What a parody of Russian life and character! If there were Russians like this—and I've never met them—it was not

worth while putting them into plays." "And what of Turgeniev?" I asked. "Turgeniev is an artist," he replied, "not a great one, but genuine. Every Russian is in his novels. He describes our most intimate experiences. Take 'First Love,' for instance. We have all been through that. But it is almost too obvious. I like Lermontov's 'Hero of our own Times' better than any Turgeniev.

"And, of course, far above them all is Pushkin. You can't understand what Pushkin means to us. He is the air we breathe: we could not exist without him. Flaubert said when Turgeniev read him some of his own translations of Pushkin—'Mais, il est un peu plat, votre poête.' He evaporates in translation. He is the exact opposite of everything that Russia is supposed, by the West, to connote, the old Holy Russia, that is: all that is vague, chaotic and formless in us, all the shapeless idealism and messy yearnings for something that is not: for the absolute. Pushkin is luminous, transparent, limited, perfect in form and expression. He appears un-Russian. Just as Shakespeare is very un-English: passionate, immediate, violent, brutal in frankness, formless, chaotic, yet lyrical and tender. I always believed I would not like Shakespeare, but now I have read him in English, studying every word as one does in a classical text, he has conquered me. Of course, I detest the character of Hamlet. He was brutal to Ophelia, and then fat and scant of breath, anyway. Shakespeare used him only as a vehicle for his poetry."

"I don't agree about the English," I said. "I think they had the characteristics you talk of in the Elizabethan age. I don't believe that national character remains the same. Puritanism changed us and the nineteenth century and the public school. And the Russians you are describing are not the Russians who made the Revolution. Probably their national characteristics will change in some degree, though it is difficult to imagine them all becoming measured and clear like Pushkin."

From literature we got on to the question of women. "You are surprised," he said, "at the part women are playing in the Revolution and the new Russia—but there is nothing startling to us in that. Every Russian believes in his heart in the superiority of women—he might not confess it but he does. I am not of course speaking of the peasants. It was easy to give women equality. There was never a fight for their rights over here as with you. Women started to study medicine and law, even in the old Tsarist days, long before they did so anywhere else in the

world. It shocked no one. Ever since the time of Catherine women have been powerful in Russia. Look at the girl in ' Virgin Soil ' and all those Nihilist women of the 'seventies : they were leaders of the revolutionary movement." " I suppose," I said, " that fundamentally Russians have not the same prejudices, the same fixed ideas, as other Europeans. I have found them more tolerant than we are, though it seems paradoxical, more willing to let people be themselves and to accept their eccentricities. No one has ever asked me why I came to Russia. The peasants did not inquire why I was living in their village. Everywhere else I have worked people have said to me—' does the Government pay you a large salary, or do you belong to a religious order, or are you looking for a husband ? ' I found their complete acceptance of me very restful, I must say."

My last day in Moscow I spent wandering about its streets. I went down to the river and looked again at the towers and cupolas of the Kremlin. Over one of its towers a red flag was flying. Lenin was there, I was told, ill, perhaps dying—it made it seem additionally mysterious and inaccessible.

I was struck once more by the exotic originality of the city, but I saw in it too the expression of immense energy and strength. It seemed as though in Russia there was a tremendous, explosive force that was always throwing up new and unexpected things—the walls of the Kremlin and Peter the Great, the novels of Dostoievsky and Tolstoy, the ballet, music like Stravinsky's, Nihilism, and now the Revolution and the rule of the Soviets. If I had left Russia without seeing the Pushkin Colony I should have carried with me little but disillusion. But the Pushkin Colony showed creative imagination. It was the grain of sand in which could be seen—a world.

CHAPTER 9

WITH REFUGEES IN SPAIN

On April 14th, 1931, King Alfonso left Madrid, and the Republic was proclaimed. The Revolution was peaceful as the army deserted the Crown, the Generals, who afterwards rebelled against it, giving the oath of loyalty to the Republic. In the General Elections that followed, the Republicans gained an overwhelming majority. In November, 1933, a new Cortes was elected, and there was a sharp swing to the Right. In October, 1934, there were Socialist risings against the right-wing government in power, especially in the mining districts of Asturias and Catalonia. They were put down with great severity (the Foreign Legion was used to suppress the Asturians). The Popular Front of Left Wing parties won a large majority at the General Elections of February, 1936, and the Right Wing began to prepare a revolt. In the first year of the Republic 10,000 army officers had been pensioned off and the military subjected to the same law as civilians, hence there were many malcontents in the army. General Franco at the head of a Military Junta and group of Right Wing politicians raised the standard of revolt in Morocco on July 17th, 1936. This was the signal for the rising of all the military garrisons of Spain. These risings were put down by the people in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Malaga, and certain other cities, but in many it was successful. Franco had the support of practically the whole of the army, the Government of the naval ratings, a small and badly armed air force and the Republican Assault Guards. The Government for a while lost all authority, and the country loyal to it was run by Workers' Committees, which armed and organised their own militias. By 1937 it had regained control.

The war was decided by foreign intervention. Franco was helped from the start by Italy and Germany, and in the end their aid gave him the victory. The Great Powers agreed on a non-intervention policy, but when it was clear that Italy and Germany were contravening this, Russia sent arms to Spain (*i.e.* in September, 1936). In November Franco advanced on Madrid and the Government moved to Valencia. Madrid was saved by Russian aeroplanes and the arrival of the International Brigade. Mussolini and Hitler began to realise that the war would not be quickly won. On February 6th, 1937, 12,000 Italians landed at Cadiz and took Malaga on February 8th. In May, 1937, an Anarchist rising in Barcelona was put down and Anarchists left the Government. Negrin became Prime Minister. On June 19th Franco took Bilbao and by October had conquered the whole of the north of Spain. In July the Government started an offensive near Madrid, but it was only partially successful. In the spring of 1938 Germany and Italy sent large reinforcements to Franco, and on March 10th he started an offensive on the Aragon front, and on April 15th reached the Mediterranean. Russia had great difficulty in getting arms to Spain

as her ships were sunk by Italians and her consignments often held up on the French frontiers. On July 25th, the Spanish Government forces crossed the Ebro and prevented an attack on Valencia. On January 26th, 1939, Barcelona fell—half a million refugees from Catalonia fled to France. On March 28th, Madrid surrendered. "Franco's entry into Madrid was the signal for a stupendous proscription. At least a million men and women were imprisoned: thousands more were executed." ("Spanish Labyrinth," by Gerald Brenan.)

I. ARRIVAL IN SPAIN

Early in 1937 I heard Alfred Jacob, the Friends' representative in Barcelona, describe the relief work he was doing in Government Spain. He was running a canteen at the station for women and children fleeing from the advance of Franco's troops and also distributing milk to infants in Barcelona. He said that nearly all the good arable and pasture land of Spain was in Franco's hands and that the food situation in the Government area was difficult, especially in regard to milk: the need for help was urgent.

I was teaching at a large girls' school in Birmingham at this time. I asked my head mistress to give me leave till half-term, and when she consented, I decided to go out to Spain at the beginning of the Easter holidays. My relief-working days were far in the past and I did not know whether I should have time to do anything helpful in the two months available, but the Friends thought I might do some useful publicity for their work, so they sent me out.

A friend of mine who knew Spain intimately urged me to go. It would be interesting to see the experiments in collectivisation, and in education. Good heavens! I thought. Social experiments, educational reform—it was not my idea of civil war. "But what do you think the Government is fighting for?" she said. "It has something it values. There is a whole Spanish Renaissance at stake." I often thought of her words when I was in Spain.

I arrived in Barcelona at the end of March, 1937. The civil war had been going on for nearly three-quarters of a year, but there were few outward signs of it in the city at that time. I saw skeletons of churches burnt at the beginning of the war, but the chaotic period—shootings, private vengeances, gangsterisms—had passed. There were still many young men to be seen in the streets and cafés, but it was said that this was because there was a shortage of equipment and munitions owing to the Non-Intervention policy.

The black-out was not thorough, so whenever there was an air-raid warning the electricity was turned off at the main. I felt great curiosity about air-raids. I had never been in one since I had seen a Zeppelin throw a bomb at Gravesend in 1914.

The night after my arrival there was a warning and the hotel porter came along our corridor, knocking at all the doors and ordering us downstairs to the dining-room. Here we listened to the wireless. It said with a solemnity and emphasis that were most alarming—"Catalans! Catalans! Serenity! Serenity! Keep calm! Keep calm! There are two enemy aeroplanes circling overhead. Go to your shelters." At intervals it repeated the advice to the Catalans to maintain serenity and calm, and after half an hour told them that all was over and they could go to bed. I found the experience a little disappointing. Except for the voice of the wireless I had heard no sound at all. The terrible raids on Barcelona, when the Germans tried out their new explosives, came nearly a year later.

I saw a number of children's colonies and schools in Barcelona and was deeply impressed by them. They were thoroughly modern, both in buildings, equipment and methods, and were like our newest and most brilliant schools. The difference was that in Spain there was no charge—the children of the poor were having the same chance as the children of the rich with us. I realised that Catalans (and many Spaniards too) are great organisers wherever their interest is aroused, and that they have a highly developed æsthetic sense. Many of the colonies looked as if they had been furnished by Heal or Gordon Russell—there were balconies and verandahs where the children had their lessons, and an admirable combination of order and freedom in their atmosphere. I will describe them in more detail in a later section.

I did not stay long in Barcelona because the Friends in London had asked me to report on the refugees in the south of Spain. I went on to Valencia, at this time the seat of the Government, and packed out with people. It was hard to find a room, but I did not need one for long as Barbara Wood, the Friends' representative, arranged for me to go on to Murcia.

II. MALAGAN REFUGEES IN MURCIA

Murcia is the capital of a province of the same name and lies about a hundred and fifty miles south-west of Valencia. As the Friends were supplying tinned milk and clothing to the colonies of orphans and young delinquents, run by the Ministry of Justice,

it was not difficult to persuade them to lend me a car. Two motherly, matronly Spanish schoolmarms from their Homes accompanied me.

It was April, and though the weather was already hot, it had not lost its freshness. The journey passed like a dream. Rice-fields, green with shoots sprouting through water, lakes with boats that had curved sails, lemon trees and orange groves, then sudden sea yellow sands, white fishing villages, then inland again, this time through groves of date-palms and gardens where hemp and pea-nuts and pimento grew, and mountains terraced for olive and vine, carob and cork-tree and fruit trees, sprayed with blossom.

Then the dream was over and we were in a nightmare. We were on the outskirts of Murcia in a vast, unfinished building of apartment flats, nine stories high, pushing our way through crowds of ragged, wild-eyed refugees. There were no windows or doors in the building: the floors had not yet been divided into rooms and formed huge corridors, which swarmed with men, women and children of all sizes and ages. There was no furniture, except a few straw mattresses. The noise was terrific: babies crying, boys rushing madly from floor to floor, sick people groaning, women shouting. There were said to be four thousand in the building, though I doubt if anyone had counted them. They surged round us, telling us their stories, clinging to us like people drowning in a bog. They were part of the hundred thousand who had fled from Malaga just before it fell to Franco's Italian army. This happened on February 8th. For four days and nights they had trekked along the coast road to Almeria, picked out by searchlight and shelled by rebel warships at night, machine-gunned from the air by day. A woman came up crying bitterly. She had lost two children in the confusion of the flight and didn't know whether they were alive or dead. Another shrieked hysterically—she had lost three, and the daughter she had still with her was dying of fever. A man showed me a scar on his forehead and his face, who at first had been patient and sad, became distorted with rage as he described the Italian plane that had swooped down upon them and bombed them as they fled. It was when they scattered and hid in ditches or amongst the reeds from these sudden raiders, that so many mothers had lost their children. That is the terrifying part when thousands flee together, pressing on each other: families get separated, and often they never find each other again. They wait behind or hurry on, but the lost one is never recovered.

A man spoke to me in English—he had had a shop in Malaga but he had always supported the Government, so he had not dared to stay. " The horror of our lives here is indescribable," he said. " They carry out the dead from this place every day."

Murcia, a town of sixty thousand inhabitants, and one of the dirtiest and most backward in Spain, had been overwhelmed by the sudden influx from Malaga. There were said to be twenty thousand in the town and more than double that in the province outside. We went to the Refugee Committee and found four distracted officials, struggling with card-indexes, rubber stamps and lists, while their room boiled over with angry men and women shaking their fists and shouting their grievances.

The trouble was, their chief yelling above the din, explained to me, that Murcia was already full before these people arrived. It was a garrison town packed with soldiers. It had two thousand wounded in improvised hospitals. It had hundreds of refugees from Madrid, Cordova, Estremadura—indeed from all over Spain. They had coped with their earlier problems, but these wild hordes from Malaga were more than they could manage. They had stuffed them into five refuges, or night shelters. Pablo Iglesias, the one we had seen, was the worst. In the other shelters they were giving two meals, but in Pablo Iglesias only supper, with milk in the morning for babies. Half of the refugees were able to buy a little food because they had brought money with them, or had a relative in the army, but the other half were wild with hunger.

I got into touch with Barbara Wood in Valencia and she sent lorry loads of food down to Murcia, especially milk, cocoa, sugar and biscuits. Many people warned me against opening a canteen amongst such wild folk. " Give out dry rations," they said. But the local committee agreed that a breakfast for the children in Pablo Iglesias was essential. They sent round an old man who had been a clerk in a drapery store and was good at making lists. He was to write down the names of the children and give them tickets for the meal. I was astounded at the result. There were only sixty names. " Well, you see, companyera," he said, scratching his head and trying to put the matter delicately, " they saw you going up and down the other day and they thought you looked a little foreign, so the rumour went round that every child on the list will be taken to Mexico or to North America or Russia." " Never mind," I said, " we'll give the sixty children cocoa and biscuits—it will be all the easier."

There were no tables and no cups, but everybody had a soup bowl and I said we would begin with that. I asked the committee to send me helpers, and the Anti-Fascist Women and the schoolmarms, but Murcia was not like Barcelona or Valencia or Madrid. It had been little changed by the Republic and only on the outside by the war. Women in Spain had for centuries lived a life of harem-like seclusion, and in Murcia the majority went on in the old way. They scarcely emerged from their flats, except to do a little marketing. They waited for Franco to bring back their father confessors, church bells, mantillas, and the old feudal hierarchy of Spain. The handful of enterprising women in Murcia were run off their feet, and my suggestion that others who were doing nothing might come and help their countrymen was received with a contemptuous smile. Go into a refuge, mix with the filthy Malagans, catch their vermin and diseases. They knew better.

The first breakfast was a great success. The children came in relays to a small room near the kitchen. They ate their biscuits and licked the chocolati out of their soup plates with enormous relish. Now and again there were scuffles, and I discovered that some enterprising youngster was being ejected from his third bout. There were also some outsizes in school children who had managed to get in—but I explained that though big, they were hungry, and they were allowed to finish their meal. I was pleased to think the spectre of Mexico had been laid.

But the next morning when I turned up to help with the Pablo Iglesias breakfast I felt something odd about the place. It was like an anthill that has been stirred up—the whole building was alive. I could scarcely get up the stairs for the press. We had to lock and bar the kitchen door and bear the smoke from the stove as well as we could. When we tried to let in the children in relays to their breakfast, we were stormed out and had to give up the attempt. I went back to the committee and found among them a new member, a sallow, dark-eyed man. He had on his little finger the long, sharp nail that indicated the brain worker. He showed initiative and resource. He was of Jewish descent and the type of Spaniard who is intrigued by foreigners. To co-operate with them added glamour to duty. He got tinsmiths to work all night moulding cups (these were made out of the condensed milk empties), and carpenters to make trestle tables and benches. We cleared a landing and put up doors and made it into a dining-room. We would give breakfast, not only to the children, I said, but to the embarrassed and creating women too, as Spaniards call

the pregnant and nursing mothers. There were men and women among the refugees whom I could buy at the price of a cup of cocoa to help with order. All the same, the first days were a bear-garden. It was easy to control the children, but the embarrassed and creating mothers were like wild animals. They broke down the doors, they flung down the sentries, they surged into the room, dipped their tin mugs into the scalding vats, fought with each other, tearing each other's hair and the clothes off each other's backs. They shrieked and gesticulated. It was not a breakfast—it was hell. They couldn't believe that there would be enough to go round. I thought wistfully of our policemen at home, and I asked the committee for civil guards, but the civil guards have revolvers and are excitable, and the committee very wisely did not risk a riot. For Spain has nothing corresponding to our police.

Where have I heard before of five thousand being fed, I thought? Of course, I remembered. But then it was a miracle. I understood it now—it was a miracle, not so much because there was enough food, but because they all sat quietly on the grass, waiting for it. The more I thought of it, the more I was amazed, and determined that we must make the same miracle work here.

I remembered that Sir George Young had a group down at Almeria—the University Ambulance Unit—working for the Malagan refugees there, and I sent an SOS to them. Three days later two fair-haired English girls called at my flat and told me they had come to help. They were young and gay and full of confidence.

In the end the breakfasts at Pablo Iglesias were like Sunday school treats followed by a mothers' meeting tea—or very nearly. And for weeks we gave bread and bully beef to the wretches who lived in the limbo where there was no second meal.

Soon after this Freda Stewart and another girl arrived from England and we got breakfasts going in the four other refuges. Soon we were feeding two or three thousand every day in comparative peace and order.

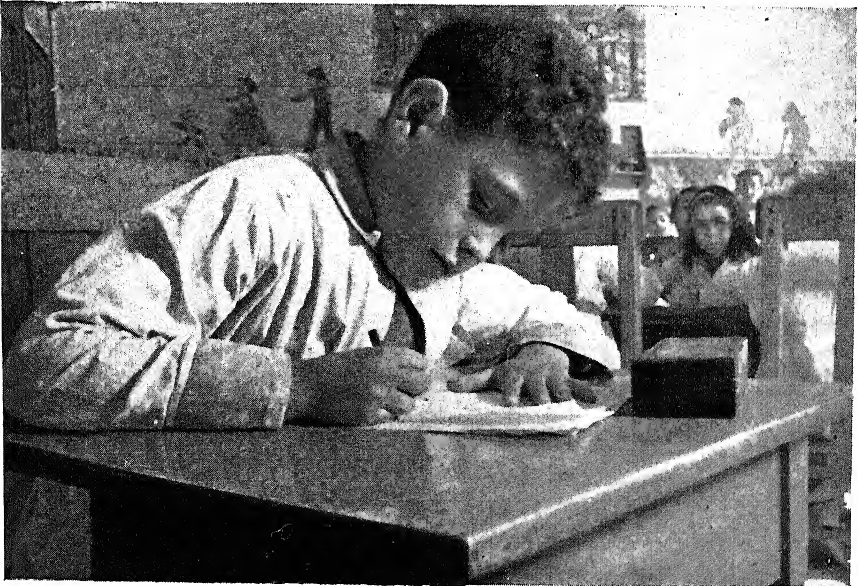
III. MADRID

I had to go back to Valencia to arrange for regular supplies for the Murcia breakfasts. While I was there, I fitted in a visit to Madrid. I went with an English journalist and the head mistress of a well-known London school in an army car.

It seemed so fantastic to be going into a city in a state of semi-siege that I scarcely noticed the journey to it. There was pretty

Hungry children in Russia and Spain:

Children in orphanage in Russian Famine, 1922.
Spanish baby with English nurse at the Murcia Hospital, 1938.
Malagan refugees at breakfast in Pablo Iglesias, Murcia, 1937.



The Spanish Republic took special care of their children during the Civil War and the Catalan Government reached a particularly high standard:

Dining-room in Barcelona for under-nourished children, supported by the 11th Division of the Republican Army.

Typical school-room in Refugee Children's Colony in Catalonia.

fierce fighting on the Madrid front at this time, but the road to Valencia was still open (it remained open till the end of the war). Franco had not succeeded in closing the gap round the city. The Italians had recently attempted to do so from the north, but had been routed at Guadalajara. On the other side the Franco forces were held by the International Brigade, entrenched on the Jarama river.

It was still April. It had been as warm as summer in Murcia and Valencia, but we were going to the highest capital in Europe on an inland tableland and the weather changed : it became cold and austere. Valencia and the luminous Mediterranean landscape around it was soon left behind us. We mounted, went down into a steep gorge and up again on to high ground. There was a fair amount of cultivation, but villages and houses were sparsely scattered. In the foreground, patches of red earth, green wheat, grey olives ; in the distance, blue hills below a rainy sky. We passed a number of lorries with food and fuel and thought how rapidly their loads would disappear in the hungry city we were coming to.

Our driver, Antonio, was a short, stocky man with an open determined face. He had been a foreman in a motor works and longed to get back and become a Stakhanovite, but his factory had been destroyed by shell fire. He had helped to take the Montana barracks in Madrid at the outbreak of the revolt and had a profound belief in the future of Spain. He was a Communist. " I admire the Anarchists," he said, " and have many friends among them. They are great idealists, but they want to jump a stage. The Communists say we must put the war before everything else and they are right. You'll see the spirit there is in Madrid," he added, " and you'll understand that we can't be defeated. In Valencia people have too easy a life—too much to eat, too much time for sitting in cafés. They get depressed. They are gayer in Madrid—there is *mucha alegría en Madrid*."

Mucha alegria en Madrid. I admit I did not feel it the first night. We arrived about six and went to the Gran Via Hotel opposite the sky-scraping Telefonica. It was like a mausoleum, for it was heavy with the long unheated winter. We went a walk along streets, once the smartest in Madrid. They were full of broken glass and lumps of plaster. There had been an artillery bombardment in the afternoon. The city was shelled every day but no one took any notice. The streets were packed with people, taking their evening stroll, and the cafés were full. No one looked

at the heaps of shattered rubble that had once been houses, nor noticed the booming of cannon and rattle of machine guns which sounded to us so alarmingly near. " That's only the battle between ' ours ' and the University City. That's not a bombardment—when did you come?" they said, in answer to our questions.

The day after our arrival we went to the Ministry of Public Instruction and talked to B., a university professor of mildly Liberal views. He was a dark-eyed, thick-set man like so many Spaniards of the South. His bushy hair was turning grey but he still had a boyish air and talked with the explosive energy that is quite usual in a Spanish professor, though it would be startling in an Oxford don. " I was caught in Madrid at the beginning of the Movement," he said. " Lucky for me. I would have been shot at once if I had been at home, for I have for long been active in the reform of education. I helped to organise missions to the villages, teaching missions. You know the sort of thing—talks on hygiene, folk plays, educational cinemas. The students spent their holidays on them. They were a great success. Garcia Llorca took part in them, produced his own plays and recited his gipsy songs. He was our greatest poet. The Fascists shot him at the beginning of the war.

" I can't tell you what it was like the first weeks in Madrid because I wasn't there. I made my own army—two hundred and fifty men—and went off to the Cordova front. It was very difficult—all we had were old shotguns, and every move had to be decided by a committee. Not very practical in war-time. But everything was wild at the beginning. The Government had little control. The officers in revolt, the police half of them Fascists, no wonder there were disorders. I was recalled to Valencia when the Government had evacuated there and given a job in the Ministry of Public Instruction—but I couldn't stand it. The Valencia atmosphere was too relaxed for me. I got them to send me back to Madrid. Here I am called the Delegate for Education and for Fine Arts : nothing like a high-sounding title. My function is to discourage education, for children at least. We must get them away. There are fifty thousand still who ought to be evacuated, but the Madrilenyas are tough. There is nothing they can't stand. But to feed a city of nearly a million, keep the factories going with raw material and the armies supplied with munitions—that's a business. We had the railway for the first months, but now that has gone, and everything has to be brought by lorry along the road from two hundred miles away.

"Ah well," he said, leaping out of his chair, "there can be only one end to it. I am glad I did not miss it. They are hard moments but heroic. Spain lived in darkness long enough—now we see the dawn. Nothing can stop the light coming—not Franco nor all his Italian and German mercenaries. No, nor Chamberlain and non-intervention either," he said, shaking our hands with a sudden smile.

This professor believes in a Spanish renaissance, I thought. And our driver Antonio feels that he is fighting for a new world. Perhaps in Spain people live and die for ideas more than in other countries. Perhaps Antonio and the Delegate for Education are the modern forms of the Cid and St. John of the Cross and Ignatius Loyola, though in England many people think that religion and mystic faith are all on Franco's side.

The Friends were distributing milk to Madrid babies. I watched the queues of women standing outside a welfare centre and thought of our depots in Vienna. But there was a great difference. In the Austrian faces there had been apathy and hopelessness, but the Madrid women looked alert and brisk. They laughed and talked as they waited. Castilians were orderly and self-disciplined—not like the poor Malagans. There were queues everywhere. I saw a vegetable cart with carrots, turnips and cabbages. The women behind it stretched in a long line, but they had put their hands on the shoulders in front of them and were dancing and singing. *Mucha alegría en Madrid.*

These Madrid women seemed to me astonishing. Not because they stood up to bombardments and air-raids, for danger is a stimulant to strong natures, as we have seen in our own cities. It was not their courage in the battle against the enemy that surprised me, but in the unceasing and inglorious battle against hunger and cold.

We met two women who had been in the militia, done sentry duty and fought in the streets. When their party had decided that women were more useful in the rear than at the front, they had, like disciplined soldiers, done a right about turn, and opened a crèche, and were now guarding the babies of factory workers, with the same zest and energy that they had once put into fighting. The Home was spotless and the babies appeared to be flourishing in the care of their fierce foster-mothers. Their real mothers, we were told, wouldn't leave Madrid because their husbands were in the trenches, a quarter of an hour from home, and liked to spend their hours off duty with the family. That was the difficulty about

evacuating the city. So many of the women had ties. As Professor B. had said, they were too tough. But everywhere we went there were posters "*Evacuad Madrid.*"

The chambermaid in our hotel was an oldish woman. Her raven black hair was turning grey, but she had the erect carriage and the alert, robust air common to the women of proletariate Spain. I stopped her in the middle of swobbing the tiled floor of my room to ask her how she was getting on.

"It's not easy," she said, "but we get accustomed. I came originally from Toledo, but I like Madrid best—I wouldn't leave it. I am a widow, I have one son, a brave boy. He was at the front at first—the youngest in his regiment, only eighteen. He didn't mind it, but he didn't like the Moors—they are treacherous creatures, you can't see them in the dark with their black faces, and they just come up and stab you. I am glad he's out now. He is working night and day in a factory making field-glasses for the war. No, I don't eat in the hotel—bless you, you think they give food away like that in Madrid! There isn't any food for the employés. I eat at home with my son and sister-in-law and Ramon, a boy of twelve I've adopted. He's a darling boy, helps me no end, takes his turn standing in the queues. That's what takes the time up. What with the work here—it's difficult. I've known the time when I've stood from five in the morning till seven at night for bread, and then there wasn't any. It's better now, they give us numbers. Fuel is the worst. For heating? Where do you come from, woman? Do you think we could waste wood on heating? Still very cold here, you say? Well, it was colder in the winter—but one gets accustomed. It's the cooking that's difficult. Sometimes I've had nothing but newspapers, and you can't fry long on newspaper. People have burnt their doors and their old furniture. You noticed the trees in the boulevards with their branches all lopped off. Well, we learn to help ourselves.

"Do you hear that—boum, boum, boum. That's Grandfather—that's a good one, that is. It's ours. It's from the Casa de Campo. Grandfather always means the beginning of a battle. We always know ours, they have a different sound. And we always know our aeroplanes.

"The people in this hotel? There are very few foreigners—they're nearly all from the destroyed houses. They've been moved here by the Government. Most of the houses in my street have been destroyed. Why don't I move? Catch me.

If I've got to be killed, I'd rather die in my own bed. No, I'm not afraid—one gets accustomed. They can't get us down. They'll never pass. They'll never take Madrid.

" What about Ramon, you say? He's not afraid either. You should see the children—a shell bursts near them and they just go on playing—they scarcely notice it now. It's better to be in Madrid with queues and with bombs than without them outside."

" They'll never take Madrid." It was the tragic, mystical faith that helped hundreds of thousands of men and women to bear untold privations for two and a half years.

When we ate our frugal meal of soup and beans in the basement of the Gran Via Hotel at night, we saw a group of people who had been attracted to the heroic city from various far quarters of the world—Hemingway and Dos Passos, the Dean of Canterbury and Frank Pitcairn, Haldane, John McMurray, a Swedish girl in trousers who had fought at the front, and two Scots from Glasgow. their shabby khaki uniforms thick with the mud of the trenches of the Jarama front. The man we talked to most was a French correspondent of *Humanité*. He had just returned from a dangerous tour of Franco Spain and had the strained look of a man who has been in constant danger. He had had a faked passport and would have been shot as a spy if his identity had been discovered. He depressed us because he was convinced that it would be a long war. " The Germans are in no hurry," he said, " they want to get hold of the Spanish raw materials for their rearmament campaign ; they'll probably use this war for trying out their new explosives and tactics. They are far more important than the Italians, though there are fewer of them. They are very efficient and control everything at the base. Salamanca is like a German town."

Life was much more normal on the Franco side, he said, as they had the best agricultural land of Spain and almost no refugees. Business was booming, and the middle class flourishing. The workers and peasants were on very low wages and were terrorised by the shootings, which had not only occurred at the beginning as on the Government side, but went on all the time—with special violence when new places were taken. The Phalangists were responsible for this and were like Hitler's S.S. or Mussolini's Blackshirts—the gangsters of the movement. The Royalists (or Requetes) had a mystic belief in their cause. He looked on them as mistaken idealists and couldn't help admiring them.

We were driven back to Valencia by Geoffrey Garratt in one of

the National Joint Committee's buses, along with thirty children whom they were evacuating from Madrid. The N.J.C. had been concentrating on this service for some time, and Garratt was in charge of it. It was hard work and not without danger, but volunteers for the service—all young Englishmen—were never lacking. Garratt was tremendously popular with them; he was the kind of leader they needed. The young men were individualistic and needed the kind of handling that other men would not have bothered to give, but which was no trouble to Garratt. He had had a varied career. He had taught at Winchester, served in the Indian Cavalry in the last war, fought an Indian famine and been correspondent to *The Manchester Guardian* in Abyssinia. He was a passionate anti-Fascist, and for this reason was giving his time and talents to Spain. He was an amusing and witty talker, unselfseeking and sincere.

IV. THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN MURCIA

When I got back to Murcia I found the breakfasts going very well, though the four Englishwomen supervising them had a constant fight to keep order. But what worried us all was that there were many children who never turned up to them. On every floor of the refuges they were lying on straw, covered with filthy rags, plagued by flies and mosquitoes, crying in feeble voices, through lips parched with fever, for water. Often their convulsive breathing showed that they were dying. The civilian hospital in Murcia was packed out. The only solution was to make a special hospital for these children.

Sir George Young had seen this need in Almeria and had opened a children's hospital there and had sent out the nurses for it from England. Once he came on a flying visit, and I asked him if he would support a hospital in Murcia too. He said that he would if I could make arrangements.

It was not easy to find a building in Murcia. I went to see the chief doctor of the place. He was young but impressive—tall, sinewy, laconic: evidently a man of action. Nothing was so essential, he said. How many beds did we want? Thirty, I said. Forty, he wrote down. "You must give us a house," I said. The doctor was an Anarchist and as the Anarchists had commandeered many of the best villas in Murcia at the beginning of the war, I thought I had come to the right door. "Come to my committee to-morrow and we'll ask them," he said. The next day I went with the doctor to the Anarchist headquarters. "Wait

a moment," he said. I waited for two hours. "They are discussing our hospital a long time," I thought. At length the doctor emerged, followed by half a dozen others—abstracted, strained, vaguely apologetic. In a day or two all would be arranged, they murmured. In a day or two came the Government crisis (it was May, 1937)—the Anarchists were turned out of the Ministry. The doctor resigned. I had to begin again.

I went to the Alcalde (the Mayor). The Alcalde was an old friend. He had already given me two expert dressmakers and two sewing machines with which to start a workshop where the refugee girls could make their own clothes. As well as being Alcalde he was a schoolmaster, and on this occasion he was out quelling a strike of student teachers. I waited two hours. He returned—sympathetic, unruffled. The next day there was an article in the local press stating that when children were dying and benevolent women had come out from England to make them a hospital, it was a scandal not to find them a house. Murcia began to take an interest. The Protestant pastor called and offered a car and the help of his daughter. Protestants were invariably pro-Government in Spain, as they were roughly handled by Franco's ultra-clerical supporters. In the end it was the civil Governor who acted. I called on him one day, and the next the most perfect house in Murcia was assigned to us—a very modern villa standing in its own grounds, with two bathrooms and two kitchens, cool, tiled floors and marble stairs, balconies and a flat roof—an ideal place for a hospital. I did not feel sorry for the owners who were turned out—an elderly married couple—for they had another house to go to.

The week spent in equipping the hospital was feverish but thrilling. It was still possible to make purchases in Murcia, and I bought pots, pans, beds and bowls, combs and card indexes. The refugees made sheets and mattress covers, nightgowns and nightshirts, and even clothes for convalescents, at lightning speed. The committee brought presents of china and glass, collected from houses of the rich who had fled at the beginning of the war. The local chemists were ransacked for medicines and equipment for the dispensary—only when Don Alfonso, the excellent Spanish doctor who had been assigned to us, ordered a screen for the dying did I remember that it was not a convalescent home we were starting but something much more serious. The nurse, just arrived from England, also brought me back to realities with her insistence on thermometers and temperature charts.

At last all was ready—the cook, the wardmaids and the washerwomen had all been hired from the eager refugee population. Our real anxiety was: should we get the children? I remembered Mexico and how the Malagans, their whole world gone, watched like tigresses over their cubs. We went round the refuges in a bus and told the parents to come with their children and see what the doctor said. They thought that there could be no harm in this, so they came. There were so many sick babies to begin with that we had to put their mothers up too, and for the first eight days we looked like a maternity home. But we had made a beginning. Our nurse, who had been grumbling all the time we had been equipping the hospital that children were dying and we must make a start, was slaked and silenced. Still more so the next week when the typhoid cases came pouring in—many of them delirious with high fever. When there were fourteen of them she reminded me that in England, when she had nursed through an outbreak of typhoid at Bournemouth, the proper ration was one sister to three patients.

The first days were extremely hectic. Being without medical training, all I was fitted to do was run the house, see to meals, laundry and equipment, interpret for the doctor and run round the refugees urging the mothers to bring their children for examination. But we were so short-handed that I had often to help with night duty. I learnt the special ritual for the typhoid patient—the constant washing and changing, and the rinsing of the mouth. Sometimes I found that a little girl had flung herself on to the floor in her delirium, often sheets and nightshirt were soaked with sweat or diarrhœa, and had to be plunged into disinfectant and clean ones found. Everywhere children cried out for water. I thanked Heaven that we lived in a land where lemons and oranges could be had for the gathering.

Most of the children recovered and after three or four weeks were sitting in the garden, thin as skeletons, but cheerful and with ravenous appetites. But some of them died. There was a boy of thirteen called Enrique. He was brought in by some neighbours from a village. He had the toughness of the real Spaniard —not a coarse, prize-fighting toughness, but the toughness of a wild cat. He was proud, uncomplaining, grateful for what was done. He was often unconscious, but in one of his lucid moments I asked him where his parents were. His mother was in Madrid, working in a factory—she had thought it was safer for him to go away. He could not remember the address. "I am sorry," he

said. " I'm stupid—I don't know why. I lived there too. Perhaps it will come back to me." I told him not to worry, but he looked very troubled. Then suddenly he smiled. He had remembered the regiment of his father. I sent his father a wire: he was given compassionate leave and saw his son before he died.

One of our strangest cases was Dolores. I had often watched with horror the convulsions of Dolores. She lay on the floor in a corner of Pablo Iglesias, shouting and shrieking, and leaping and lashing like a fish on dry land. She had a shaven head and I thought she was a boy. " We shan't be able to do anything for this mad child," I thought, and was horrified when the father brought her in his arms to our dispensary. " But this is a child you must take," said Don Alfonso. " You will cure her in a fortnight. She has a kind of violent St. Vitus' dance, exacerbated by shock during the flight." We put her in a room by herself on a mattress on the floor, and for three days she howled the hospital down, and then suddenly she was quiet. Her hair grew, her cheeks brightened, and in a short while Dolores was a lovely little girl, very naughty and very proud—the queen-tyrant of the hospital.

It was not always easy to get the kind of light food needed by our hospital. We had our own stores from England, but we needed eggs and fish. The International Brigade came to our rescue here. They had hundreds of wounded in Murcia, and their lorry drivers did a great deal of the provisioning of the hospitals, scouring the countryside for vegetables, fruit, eggs and meat, and going to the coast for fish. Our main contacts were with the English and Americans, but there were people from every nation in the world in the Murcia hospitals: the only nationality I never came across was Russian. A friend of mine who had nursed at the front told me that the Russians who came had all been experts and had never been in the ordinary rank and file of the Brigade. They had spent their time training Spaniards and showing them the use of the fighter planes which they had sent over in October, 1936—and which had helped to save Madrid. She did not think that there had ever been more than a few hundred, though some Ukranians from East Poland counted themselves Russian, and there were some Whites from Paris.

It was no new thing for the International Brigaders to take an interest in children. When they had first come to Murcia in 1936, they had helped to open children's homes, and for a whole year they ran a playground for refugees in the Botanical Gardens

of the town. They had a number of nurses with their units who spent their time on these projects, and the men gave up part of their pay and their off-duty to them.

"You can't imagine what those first International Brigaders were like," a young Murcia teacher of foreign extraction said to me. "I did not know there were such idealists in the world. There were a lot from Central Europe, and some French, and one or two Italians from the Garibaldi Unit, but they were all amazing. They spent their free time rushing about doing things for children and refugees: they were full of faith and fervour, and never thought of themselves. Most of those early ones are dead now—they died for Madrid in the great push of November. Now there are all sorts in the Brigade—many grand people, but some awful scallywags. On the whole the French are the worst. It's too near France and too easy to come. The apaches that used to go into the Foreign Legion find it simpler to slip over the Pyrenees and join up here—it makes it very complicated and difficult."

"There are scallywags everywhere," I said, "not only in the Brigade. They often manage to edge their way into relief work. Upheavals attract them. Doctors fleeing from the law, drug addicts, alcoholics, sexual perverts, misfits, wangle an entrance somehow—especially if the people in charge of appointing staff have too great a belief in human nature. They get testimonials from well-meaning folk who think they may make good in new surroundings. They probably think so themselves, but the freedom and excitement of a foreign country, which often go to the head of normal people, are certainly too much for the abnormal. I saw that in Serbia and again here. But tell me more about the Brigade."

"The French have some of the best as well as the worst. The English are most of them good but very quiet. The Americans stand up for themselves better. Many of them are merchant seamen who were in a strike along the Pacific, and there are a lot from Texas. There are some admirable men amongst them."

I had found a number of wounded Englishmen in the hospitals of Murcia. They had all had good jobs in England—now they lay in sweltering heat, in wards where there were forty or fifty other men, unable to understand what their nurses and doctors said to them, often in pain and unable to swallow the Spanish food, for their prejudice against the olive oil in which it was cooked was persistent. But they never complained. Sometimes I asked them if it had been difficult to make the decision of coming. Most

of them said that it had been a bit of a struggle, but in the end it had just seemed something one had to do. Some of them were Communists—I could understand them because their creed was a religion to them—but several belonged to the Labour Party or were just Left Wing, and were men one could more readily imagine wheeling the baby out in a pram, or mowing the back lawn on Saturday afternoons than fighting on the battlefields of Spain.

There was something fantastic about the International Brigade. Hundreds of years ago, I thought, there were the same incongruous bands from all over Europe struggling on the mountains and plains of Palestine, in a country not unlike this country of Spain, to save the tomb of Christ from the infidel. But it was easier to go on those crusades: there was glamour and prestige about them, public enthusiasm, the blessing of the church, the promise of life everlasting. These crusaders had come without arms or money or promises. They had hitch-hiked through France and sneaked over the Pyrenees in the dark like criminals.

There were few intellectuals amongst the Brigaders in Murcia. An American boy was an exception. He told me that his father had given him money to study at the Sorbonne and still thought that he was there. "It's an odd thing," he told me when I asked him if he wanted any books. "The only thing that you can read at the front is poetry. There are two Irish chaps who quote Shakespeare to each other all the time. Give me poetry—other stuff is not worth while."

Amongst the English there had been some intellectuals at the beginning and a few like Tom Wintringham survived. But John Cornford, the Cambridge student, David Guest, the university lecturer, and Ralph Fox, all fell in the early days of the war—that same Ralph Fox whom I had last seen during the Russian famine of 1922, looking so young and triumphant after his horse-buying expedition.

As June neared its end I had a pang of conscience. My head mistress had given me leave till half term, and I had already outstayed it. There were limits even to her patience and sympathy with other people's distress. But before the end of the month two things happened—a relief column came up to us from Sir George's Almeria hospital, and Esther Farquhar, a representative from the American Friends' Service Council, arrived to take on the general relief of Murcia.

It was fortunate for the refugees of the south of Spain that the

Americans took them as the sphere of their activity. This had not been decided in a haphazard way but in conference with others. There were a number of foreign organisations in Spain by this time, but the chaos of relief in Serbia after the Four Years' War was avoided, and there was excellent co-operation between them all. As long as the road between Barcelona and Valencia remained open, their representatives met every month at a co-ordinating committee, together with delegates of the Spanish Government, to compare notes, report on activities, decide on future work, and see how they could co-operate with each other.

It is often easier to start things than to carry them on. The opening of the children's hospital in Murcia was a rash venture. Several people had warned me against it. The funds required to support it were very considerable and increased with time, for the need of it was so desperate that it had to be enlarged. The number of beds went up to fifty, and it could not be run without three trained English sisters. Besides its in-patients, hundreds of out-patients came to its dispensary every week. It was known as the English hospital because of its origin, and the Americans might well have washed their hands of it. But they had come to help the Spanish people, and when they knew that Sir George Young's funds were exhausted, they took over its entire cost, and maintained it until Franco entered Murcia in April, 1939. They would have continued to support it after this, for the Friends are unpolitical and help where help is needed, but the Phalange closed it a day or two after their entry.

V. OCCUPATIONAL CENTRES

I returned to Spain at the beginning of August, 1937, with six clear months ahead of me, as my school had given me a term off. I had a curious experience in the train from Boulogne to Paris. A Frenchman, seeing that my luggage was labelled for Spain, fell into conversation with me. He sympathised with the Government and decried Blum's non-intervention policy. I told him some of my experiences. When we were nearing the Gare du Nord, a tall dark man in the corner, who had so far been silent, said to me, " I also am going to Spain, but not to the same side as you. I am a Mexican, the son of General (he mentioned a well-known name), but I have not lived in Mexico for a long while— I was brought up in exile. I am a Catholic. I am going to fight for my Church. I have no alternative. Yet I have no illusions.

It grieves me deeply that there are Germans and Italians on the sacred soil of Spain."

Before he got out he shook my hand and thanked me because I was trying to save the lives of Spanish children.

Another kind of crusader, I thought, ready to give his life to Spain, and I remembered what the correspondent of *Humanité* had said about the mysticism of the Requetés he had met on Franco's side.

I went back to see my old friends in Murcia, although I didn't expect to stay there as the Americans had taken it over. But there was such an abyss of misery there, and at that time there were only two of them to cope with it, so when they asked me to stay I consented gladly. I had enjoyed working with Americans in Vienna and welcomed the new opportunity. Moreover, Murcia, miserable town that it was, drew me like a magnet.

In August it was burning hot. To cross its squares through the glaring sunlight needed resolution. Fortunately Murcia was made up of narrow, twisting passages, and edifices which, though jerry-built, were several stories high, so that one could slink along in shade most of the time.

Murcia still looked what it had been for centuries, an Arab town. Its two main shopping streets had once been souks—the street of the silversmiths and the linen weavers. Murcia was the old Medinat Mursiyah of the Moors and was the centre of one of the richest *huertas* or gardens of Spain. The Moors had created this garden by irrigation and, after their expulsion in the sixteenth century, the Spaniards had carried it on, whereas the wonderful irrigation works in Andalusia had been allowed to fall into disrepair by the grandee landowners, and Andalusia, from being the richest part of Spain, had become the poorest. Murcia has one of the lowest rainfalls of Spain, but the turbulent yellow Segura sweeps through its plain. Its waters are controlled and used for cultivation and keep the *huerta* green and fruitful.

In the nineteenth century the Segura often overflowed and caused great damage in Murcia. It is curious to read in Proust how Swann met Odette at a fête in Paris given to raise money for the families of drowned Murcianos. To prevent the recurrence of flood, an embankment called the Malecon was built. This is the great promenade of Murcia. Even during the war it was always crowded at sunset, the time of the Spanish *paseo*, mainly with girls walking arm-in-arm with each other and tossing their heads haughtily at the saucy remarks addressed them as homage

by black-eyed Republican soldiers or blue-eyed International Brigaders. At one side of the Malecon are groves of date palms and orange trees, on the other the rushing brown river and the vast blue-green *huerta* ringed with tawny hills; but the youth of Spain does not waste its eyes on scenery at *paseo* time.

The Murcianos are looked down on by the whole of Spain. Their rich citizens are famed for their rapacity and lack of public spirit, the poor for their uncouth manners, their dirt and ignorance. It is true that many parts of the Murcia province are extremely arid: the Murcianos are people who come from an extensive region, not just from the town and its neighbourhood. I went once to Albacete and passed through a country like the mountains of the moon, where it seemed scarcely possible for living beings to survive. Poverty drove many from these parched regions into the factories of Barcelona; hence in Catalonia Murcianos were well known and synonymous with backwardness and degradation. The priests had done their best to keep them in this state. The province, and above all the town was full of churches, monasteries and convents. These had not been burnt down, and in the Civil War the churches were used as warehouses, the monasteries and convents were packed with refugees. Though these were a little better than Pablo Iglesias, they were almost as depressing. In one of them I found a family of four living in a cupboard in the wall. The cupboard gave them a little privacy and they refused to budge. One could scarcely blame the Malagans for the filthy state of the refuges, for the whole of Murcia was dirty. Every now and again the water system failed, because of the extra pressure put on it, and because the charcoal filter-beds were inadequate. There were no public latrines and few in the houses. People squatted down in the *huerta* or in the streets. The dust that blew on to the fruit and vegetables in the market place was defiled: no wonder there was a great deal of typhoid.

I had come back feeling like a millionaire. Sympathy with Spain was increasing in England. I had held several public meetings and had been given hundreds of pounds to spend as I liked. When passing through Barcelona I had bought thousands of yards of cotton materials at a factory. I advertised for sewing machines in Alicante and Murcia and purchased all that were offered. By degrees I got ten sewing workshops started in Alicante and Murcia and the towns and villages in between where refugees were congregated. Soon the rooms where these girls worked were the one

cheerful spot in the refuges. The Americans gave the girls cocoa and biscuits to keep up their strength: they began to look healthier and chatted and sang while they sewed.

The autumn and winter evenings were long and heavy for refugees. I brought them games and books and was surprised by the eager cries of "now we shall be able to study." Then I discovered that the girls, who had begun to look so civilised, clean and neat in the new clothes made in the workshops, could neither read nor write. I asked for teachers, for I knew that they were among the most progressive elements in the country, and schoolmasters self-sacrificing enough to give evening classes to refugees after their day's work were in fact forthcoming.

From my talks with the refugees I began to discover the social background of the Malagans. Most of them had known such bitter poverty in their own homes that their life in the Murcia refuges, unspeakable as it was, was only one degree worse. Many of them were from the country round Malaga and had lived in the poorest hovels, or even in caves burrowed in the hillside. These were not cool and pleasant underground dwellings, with tiled floors and walls, such as I had seen near Valencia. Most of them had no furniture except bedding and a cooking pot. The conditions of the poor in Andalusia were, with Estremadura, the worst in Europe—their poverty the most abject. It was the area of the great estates and many of them were landless peasants, unemployed for six months of the year, as there was no winter work, and there was no relief for them, either from church, state or town. When they had work they seldom earned more than 1*s*. 6*d*. to 2*s*. a day. Practically all of them were illiterate. For centuries education had been in the hands of the church, who had preferred to keep them ignorant. There were some convent schools for girls where the nuns could not read or write, and could only teach housework. There was some state elementary education under the Monarchy, but it was poor and inadequate. The Republic had promised them better things and had built schools, but was only at the beginning of its programme when the Civil War had broken out. When I heard these things I understood why Malaga was considered a hotbed of revolution, and why they had burnt the churches, which to them were the symbol of oppression.

It was interesting to watch girls who had come from a way of life so primitive, learning to make clothes, to read and write, take an interest in their personal appearance, and work for the common

good. The workshops seemed, not the dull places they are in our industrial towns, but islets of civilisation in the middle of chaos.

The older men were still most of them idle, so I set up alpargata workshops for them. Alpargatas are the rope-soled sandals with canvas tops which are the only footwear for most Spaniards. The hemp and esparto grass which made the rope grew near Alicante. The refugees needed thousands of pairs, as they only last a few weeks; they kept the alpargata-makers busy.

The support of all these workshops involved a continual expense. Two or three relief workers in Spain had warned me earnestly against starting them. "You'll begin them with a great blare of trumpets," they said, "but you'll never be able to keep them up and soon they'll all fizzle out." The danger of this was so real that I had sleepless nights thinking of it. It was the same with everything I started in Spain—the wise and experienced warned me against it, whatever it was: the breakfasts in Pablo Iglesias, the children's hospital in Murcia, and now the workshops. They spoke with the voice of prudence. But in relief work prudence is not enough. When needs are great, risks have to be taken. The workshops endured till the end of the war, partly because the American Friends took them under their wing and supplied them with materials from their warehouse and a superviser to keep them up to standard, partly from the support of friends in England, and most of all because the Murcian Refugee Committee acquired as its president a man of great energy and character, a skilled worker from a Madrid factory, called Manolo. Some Spaniards were jealous of the prestige foreigners gained amongst the refugees by their relief work, but Manolo had no petty feelings of this sort. He appreciated the constructive idea behind the workshops, supported them with Government funds and urged the refugees to join them. He did what he could to clear up the Murcia chaos and even succeeded in evacuating Pablo Iglesias to the villages outside at one moment, though this was rather like sweeping up the sands: soon a fresh surge of refugees made its reoccupation necessary. Before the end, there were said to be nearly three million refugees on Government territory. At every fresh advance of the Franco troops, the officials and the poor fled in terror.

All this time nothing had been done for the boys. There were crowds of them too old at fourteen for the Government colonies. They hung round the refuges, teasing the girls, or formed themselves into gangs to loot the markets, raid orchards or throw stones

at peaceful citizens. It seemed essential to think out something for them too.

VI. THE FARM COLONY AT CREVILLENTE

A farm colony, where the boys could learn vegetable gardening and simple crafts, such as we had had for orphan boys in Serbia, seemed the best solution.

Once this idea had germinated, the first great find was Rubio and the next the Mill. I found Rubio running a boys' camp outside Valencia—he seemed very fair for a Spaniard. Actually he was a German. His smile looked too ironic for a German, but he had lived under Spanish skies for twelve years, and he had Jewish blood. His profession was engineering, his hobby boys and agriculture. He said he would like to start a farm colony for refugees if I found the building and the money for it. He gave me an introduction to Emilio, a leader of the Pioneers (a kind of Popular Front Boy Scouts) in Alicante.

Emilio was seventeen, slender, dark-eyed, wiry. He reminded me of some sort of animal of the cat tribe, something not bigger than a panther : Spaniards of the south are rather small. A nice animal anyway, quick and graceful in movement. He told me that as he was now useless for war he was devoting himself to rear-guard activities, waking up the civilian population. He was so well made and alert that I was startled to hear this, but he showed me his arm, shot through by a machine-gun bullet on the Cordova front. "At the beginning of the war anyone could seize a gun and run off," he said apologetically.

Emilio set to work energetically. He sent telegrams to thirty towns and villages in the Alicante Province, asking if they had any building free. He got a few replies and we began house-hunting. That meant a number of fantastic journeys, often in the scorching heat of the Spanish midday. At last Emilio told me in triumph that Crevillente had something that we must see.

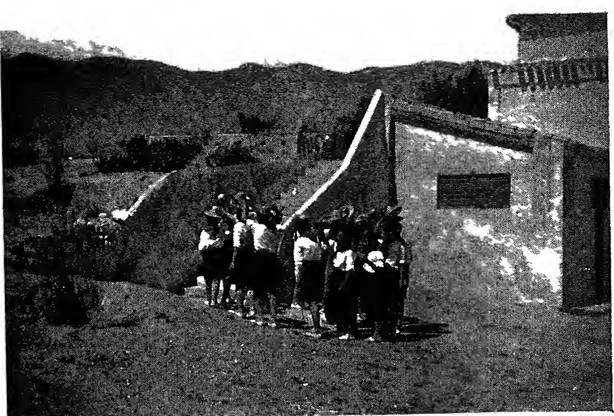
Getting about Spain was difficult. We got up at six and then waited for an hour for a train that took two hours to go twenty-five miles. Part of the journey was along the sea, the limpid sea of the south, blue in the distance and translucent green near the sandy shore, where pinpoint waves break with a sighing sound. When we got to Crevillente we had a long walk from the station through the *huerta*, rich with ripe tomatoes and pimento and blossoming orange trees. The village looked African in the distance. It had yellowish-white houses crowned by the dome

of a church, and bordered by date palms, behind which was the dry outline of treeless hills. The place we were looking for was a mill in the sierra. It was midday and we were hungry, for Spain in wartime provided no breakfast, but we had no time to eat, so off we went up a steep mule-track under the burning sky. We passed cave dwellings, bored into the cliff. In the distance one could tell that there were houses only because of the chimneys sticking above the ground. In front of them old men were plaiting the hemp that grows round Crevillente, making soles for alpargatas.

We came to the top of a hill and had to dip down through a gorge and cross over what had once been a river and climb up again. It was so parched and dry that it was difficult to imagine how anything that one could turn into a farm colony could exist up there. Just as I was thinking this I heard a sound—the most wonderful sound one can hear in southern Spain—the sound of water, and there beside us in admirably cemented channels was a clear rushing stream. And suddenly we came upon the mill. I had imagined it would be a mill like Don Quixote's with great sails turning lazily in the wind, but this was quite different. There were springs in the mountain behind, and it had been a water mill twenty years before and had ground flour. There were three buildings. The best was the first we came to : a house with eight large rooms and a terrace that looked down to sun-baked Crevillente and over the rich garden of the Alicante plain, right to the far sea. On the plain there were salt lakes that, catching the light of the sky, made the view still more vast and luminous. Beyond it to the south and west mountains limited the horizon, with dry definition, but the terrace had the sun from the moment of its rising out of the Mediterranean till its setting beyond Murcia's purple hills.

In the next building two peasants were living—carefully planted terraces, where alfalfa was growing and potatoes and tomatoes and a few pomegranate and almond trees, showed where they had been at work. But there were many terraces still unplanted with just a solitary date palm or carob tree growing on them, and that was where our boys might come in.

After I had found the mill, all I wanted was Rubio, and soon I had him there, scrambling about, exploring and making plans. There was no light in the place and no water laid on and no drainage, but he said he could do it all. And he was as good as his word. What a *tour de force* it was, no one who did not know

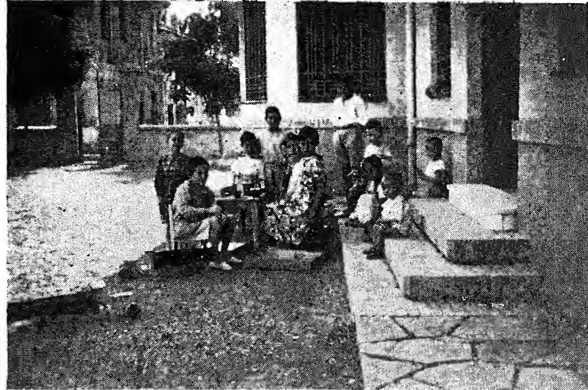


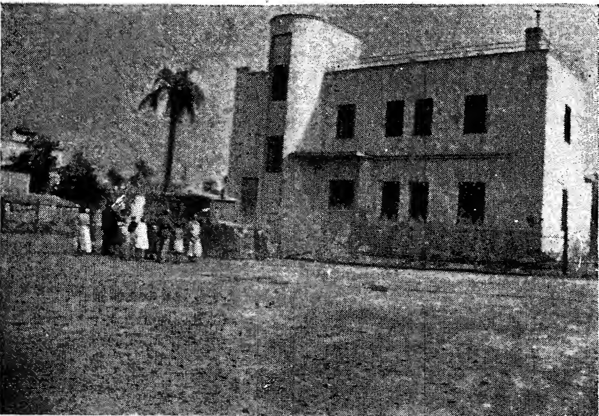
Boys at Crevillente Farm Colony greeting F. M. W. Easter, 1938

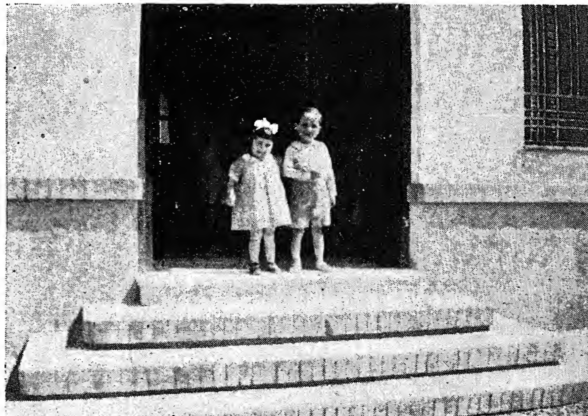
Rubio and Spanish boy clearing irrigation channels

Preparing the terrace for irrigation.

Getting water at the camp at Benidorm, 1938







Breakfast at Pablo Iglesias.

Murcia Children's Hospital.

Convalescents at Murcia Children's Hospital.

Angel and Angelita cured from whooping-cough and typhoid leave the Hospital.

war-time Spain can have any idea. The electric current had to be brought from the other side of the gorge a kilometre away and transformed from high tension to low. In a country where everything was scarce, it took all the tenacity of a German to accomplish this. It is true that the Spaniards were helpful—one authority provided ten blown-down telegraph posts, and someone else copper wire, but even when the light was in, there was all the tubing and wash basins and shower baths to scare up from somewhere, and plumbers and carpenters and masons to be hired and directed, and everything to be brought up by mule cart from the village below. Anyone else would have got discouraged, but Rubio, dressed in blue overalls, worked nimbly from dawn till sunset, and smiled his ironic smile when people told him he would never get it done.

My part was furnishing, and here many kind people helped. A Swiss mission brought beds from an abandoned children's home in Madrid—a three-hundred-mile journey, the American Friends came rattling down in their lorry from Barcelona with the pails and pots and pans that could no longer be got in the south, the carpenter made tables, and I bought chairs and cretonnes in Alicante, and the pretty hand-painted crockery still to be found in its market places.

When the Home was nearing completion, Rubio insisted that before the arrival of the boys we must have an inauguration—invite all the notabilities of the province, and all the distinguished foreigners of the relief missions from up and down Spain. I was pessimistic. "Think of the difficulties of transport," I said, "how can they all arrive from everywhere at the right time? And you know what the Spaniards are—terrifically energetic when it comes to fighting, but they see no point in sweating up a steep mule path in the heat of the day. Hiking is a Nordic amusement they don't understand. We will be up here waiting and waiting and no one will come. It will be all very depressing." "Ya veremos" (well, we'll see), Rubio said soothingly and went on sending out his invitations.

The day came, December 29th. We had all been up late the night before, painters and carpenters and masons and sewing girls and Rubio and I, working feverishly putting on the last touches and up again at dawn—I too, though I didn't think anyone would come. Then suddenly about eleven in the morning I saw a moving mass coming over the brow of the hill. Everybody was coming—mayors and doctors and Government officials and

inspectors and head masters, English visitors from Barcelona, Valencia and Alicante, and Americans from Murcia. It was a proud day for Rubio and for me.

After making them climb up and down the terraces and showing them all over, we sat in the pretty sun-filled dining-room over vermouth and salted almonds, making speeches and drinking to the future of the colony. The delegate from the Provincial Board of Education in Alicante said that we represented the real England, the England of John Stuart Mill, the England that had taught the world liberty. But the Quakers, who had come out to inspect the relief work in Spain and whose visit happened to synchronise with our opening, gravely reminded the audience that Friends represented nothing except peace and goodwill, and that their mission was to save children without regard for race or creed, or political colour. They were working on the other side too, they said, in fact wherever there was need. Manolo, my friend from Murcia, not daunted by this, said that children were the hope of the new Spain, and in this peaceful place they would learn to be good men, worthy of those who were fighting for their freedom. The Spaniards uttered their platitudes with such fire, they sounded like new watchwords. The omens were good for our colony, but as I looked at the speakers, so living and convinced and brave, I wondered what would be their end. We were still in 1937, but even then a voice inside me spoke of the doom to come, although I was quick to silence it.

VII. SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

While Rubio was getting the mill ready, I made a study of the social experiments of the Spanish Government, especially in their handling of refugees. I was curious to know what they did in the first stages, so daunting to the inexperienced. In Catalonia the sorting station was the Stadium. This was admirably suited for the purpose. It is a vast structure, capable of seating 80,000—the Olympic Games had been held there just before the Civil War. (It is said that 800 Germans attended these and, posing as Anarchists, incited disorders to discredit the Republic.) It has bath-rooms, dressing-rooms, and restaurants where 4,000 can be fed. At times of Franco advances 11,000 refugees passed through the Stadium in a week. Arrangements were remarkably efficient and the refugees were used at once in the organisation of the camp. The turnstiles and loud-speakers were a great help in the work of registration. Clerks to help in

the writing out of identity and food-cards were summoned through the loud-speakers and butchers, bakers, cooks, laundresses, cleaners and nurses to work in the kitchen and improvised hospital. I realised how much easier it is to deal with crowds now than it was in the last war—because of the wireless and loud-speakers—and how much better it is to call on refugees to co-operate than to herd them like cattle. The registration revealed what skilled labour there was and this was drafted into factories with little delay. Many women and children stayed for days and even weeks in the Stadium—but they looked remarkably tidy and cheerful (very different from the poor Malagans). I saw a girl with a long rather English face and prettily waved hair, sitting on the grass reading aloud to an absorbed crowd of children and in another corner a black-eyed, full-bosomed girl drilling a group of merry toddlers. The children were often sent to Colonies and the mothers given work—or else they were sent in family groups to Hostels in the interior.

The open-air Day Colony or Solarium was an excellent device for dealing with the hordes of refugee children that nearly every village and town in Government Spain had at this time. They were cheaper to run than residential colonies, needing less equipment and staff and avoided the break-up of the family which causes such anguish to refugees. Some advanced schools in Barcelona (like the Escuela del Mar) adopted the Solarium idea, when children began to suffer from mal-nutrition, and introduced rest and recreation in the open air.

I visited a High School for working women and men discharged from the army. In the library I thought of what Logan Pearsall Smith calls "the hush of the human spirit in the ghostly presence of its own immortality"—the girls and young men were working with such an air of absorption and dedication. It seemed remarkable to be doing so much for education at such a time. I was told that thousands of new schools had been opened since the beginning of the war and that "flying brigades" had gone out to the villages to teach illiterates their letters.

But what interested me most of all were the children's colonies. It was essential to know the principles on which these were run so that we should not fall below their standard. This was very high, though as difficulties of getting staff and food increased, many of them deteriorated. Still, I doubt if ever so many lovely homes for the children of the poor were created within so short a time in any country of the world. At the start, the Government

had, admittedly, had great advantages. The rich had fled and it had commandeered the villas and hotels they had abandoned. These mansions were many of them in luxuriant gardens, in the hills or by the sea. The climate favoured them too, for the east coast of Spain is like an unexploited Riviera. But the country was at war, and the organisation of hundreds of homes was a huge task. There were said to be sixty thousand children in them before the end of 1938.

The most perfect colonies I saw were in Catalonia. The Catalans had an advanced social service. Voluntary societies were responsible for many residential nurseries and children's homes, but most of them came under the Education Department, and their high standard was due to the vigour and vision of Jesus Hernandez, its Minister, and his collaborators. They looked like modern boarding schools for the rich, rather than homes for raga-muffins from the slums of Madrid, Bilbao and Malaga. Many of them had cool, tiled floors and staircases freshly washed every day, painted walls, and beds with bright cretonne covers made with trim precision. Cleanliness was a fetish of the Republic : in the old regime godliness had been enough.

Not all the homes were in mansions. One of the happiest was at Perelló near Valencia. The boys and girls were in family groups in five different cottages (all the colonies were co-educa-tional and took children up to fourteen). Angel Llorca, a charm-ing white-haired old man, who had been a pioneer of education in the poor quarters of Madrid, and a follower of the great educa-tionlist Cossio, was in charge of them. When I arrived the children were bathing in the sea, but they soon collected in a large, friendly room for their evening session. They sat round tables, painting or playing games or sewing, then they recited and sang with verve and spontaneity. After this Angel Llorca sum-moned the children's Parliament, and the children discussed the various problems of their Home, with complete unselfconscious-ness. They were mostly homely matters—a rearrangement of their lessons, the feeding of the chickens and rabbits, the assign-ment of domestic duties, the water supply. This was brought every day in jars on mules—water was a great problem in many of the colonies in Spain.

Government Spain was advanced in educational experiment. I began to understand what my friend had meant by a Spanish renaissance. The movement for reform had begun in the nine-teenth century under Francisco Giner and gathered great

momentum with the establishment of the Republic. Their modern secondary schools (the *instituto escuela*) impressed me particularly. I visited one in Barcelona where there were six hundred boys and girls (they were all co-educational). It combined order with informality. There were no desks, just small tables, sometimes separate, sometimes put together for larger groups with a vase of flowers in the middle. They were taught on a modified Dalton system. There were classes, but many boys and girls were working together on special assignments. Forty of them were away on a week's educational excursion in the mountains. They all went these expeditions in turn, staying in huts, doing their own cooking, making maps of the district and collecting specimens for their science lessons. Handwork was compulsory and of a high standard. The children printed their school magazine on their own printing press. I saw several numbers illustrated with original coloured prints and lino cuts. In one they had printed with musical notation the folk songs they had collected from the peasants on one of their excursions. The headmaster was surprised to hear that we don't have printing presses in all our schools. "Most of the elementary schools in Catalonia have them," he said; "it is rather a craze but it makes the children put more effort into their poems, compositions and artwork. It is as great an incentive to them to finish what they have started and achieve a certain standard as the production of plays and puppet shows." They had recently produced Mozart's Bastia and Bastiana and a translation of Sophocles' Antigone. The school had adopted a holiday home for refugees, had cleaned and distempered it, and taken turns to help in the running of it. Much greater stress was laid on oral work than in our schools. Examinations were mostly oral. The fees of the school were 3*s*. 6*d*. a year. Education at the university was also practically free.

Cultura Popular sent hundreds of travelling libraries to the hospitals and armed forces (or armies). People told me that soldiers learning to read and write, or scrambling for books behind the lines of the front, were a memorable sight. I did not see this, but I attended some talks given by an elementary school teacher to young people at a holiday home and was amazed at their quality and at the rapt attention of the listeners. They were on Spanish history, and as I saw the drama of Columbus and the Conquistadors and the war against Napoleon pass before my eyes, I felt that Spaniards had a natural gift for teaching.

I visited a collectivised firm of drapery chain stores. The

former directors had agreed to the collectivisation and had remained on fixed salaries. Some of the profits were paid in taxes and as bonuses to the employees, but most were used to provide services for them: a club room, library, cinema, evening classes and a school for their children, with roof garden playground. Sweated labour had been abolished: the shirt making which had formerly been done at home was now in a room fitted with modern machines and properly paid.

What startled me in Spain was to see so much that was extremely modern and advanced, side by side with dirt, degradation and mediæval conditions. It was light struggling with darkness. The Republic had committed a thousand errors, but it was on the side of light. It made me realise once again, as I had in the Pushkin colony in Russia and in Vienna, the life-giving force of their new social order. How false it is to think, as so many do, I reflected, that this system reduces everything to a dull uniformity, manufactures a mass man and extinguishes culture. The contrary is true. The country that adopts it is able to draw on talents that are running to waste. Out of a weed-choked plot it can make a garden. In our slums of London, Liverpool and Glasgow there are riches which we are too lazy and indifferent to tap. "England must be very wealthy to be so wasteful," a Czech refugee once said to me, looking at some meadows in the Cotswolds that were choked with thistles. The trouble is that we are not and that we can't afford it.

Ramon Sender expresses this idea, writing of a peasant whom he met in the Madrid militia. "What would Spain become if men like him, free from the atavism of caste, strong, of virgin brain, were to be educated and reach the top! What surprises they would bring to us in the arts, in politics, in science!"

VIII. BOYS AT THE FARM COLONY

Relief workers in Spain lived in the moment. They had little time to think of the future. Many nations had missions in Spain by this time—the Swiss, and Swedes, for instance, as well as the Scotch, English and Americans. They hoped that the hospitals and children's homes, which they equipped with lavish generosity, might continue their usefulness after the war. Though not all foreigners recognised it, this depended on the Government forces gaining the victory, for they were all in mansions which would be demanded back by their owners if Franco won. But for a long time in the Government area the assumption was that Franco

must be defeated in the end. This optimism vanished abruptly in March, 1938.

On March 11th, Hitler seized Austria. At the same time General Franco received immense quantities of munitions and reinforcements from Germany (to compensate Mussolini for his set-back on the Brenner), and was able to start what we should now call a blitzkrieg on the Aragon front. The method which the Germans were later to use against Poland and in 1940 against Holland, Belgium and France was first tried out in Spain. Franco's army, now thoroughly mechanised, mowed down resistance. Thanks to their allies, they had a vast superiority in tanks and aeroplanes. Soldiers who fought in those terrible days described to me later the horror of the dive bombing and the complete lack of anti-tank weapons which made it impossible to check the advancing tide.

It was with great foreboding that I set off in the beginning of April, 1938, to visit the Farm Colony. Franco's aim was to cut off Barcelona from Valencia, and the south: already he had almost reached the sea. I was afraid that I would be too late to get past. I had heard from Rubio about the arrival of the first boys and had been given money to equip another of the mill houses and increase the numbers from thirty to sixty—fifty boys and ten staff. I burned with impatience.

When I secured a place in the French aeroplane at Toulouse without any delay, I was very pleased. I need not have worried—I was the only passenger for Spain. Barcelona was calm, but tense and exceedingly serious. It was on the edge of the abyss, and knew it. The Friends' work had greatly increased from the previous year. They were bringing lorry loads of food over the Pyrenees, helping to support thousands of children in the lovely colonies which I had seen a year before and had net-worked Barcelona with milk canteens. But I had not time to look at any of their enterprises. One of the workers, Dermod O'Donovan, was driving a lorry through by night to Valencia and said he would take me. We left at once.

That night drive along what had, a few weeks before, been a peaceful highway through olive yards and orange groves, was almost unbearably sad. All night long the soldiers passed us in unceasing traffic from the south—tired, weather-beaten men from other fronts, packed so tight in open lorries that none of them could sit down. Occasionally there was an odd machine gun or a tank, but arms were few, and the fearful fragility of human flesh

and blood when opposed to high explosive and modern munitions was forced on my consciousness.

Flitting in the opposite direction were peasants fleeing from the new advances—women with babies in their arms trudging on foot, or on mule carts sitting on a few wretched possessions. Some were resting in the olive yards; all were silent as though they thought sound might attract "black birds" (enemy aircraft). A peasant near Tortosa asked us in a whisper if it were true that fifty thousand Frenchmen had arrived to help the Government, and if we knew that the enemy was just there—pointing to the hills in the west. We passed towns that I had known before, busy with life, now half-destroyed and empty.

Then suddenly I was up on the mountainside above Crevillente in the splendid sunshine of a Mediterranean spring with Rubio and the boys welcoming me and rushing to unpack the presents I had brought them. Plunged into the activities of a Spanish farm, my gloom dispersed and, such is the resilience of human nature, I soon forgot the suffering I was so aware of in Barcelona and on my night journey.

The life of the colony was absorbing, but still more was equipping it for thirty newcomers. Here I think with gratitude of the refugee girls in the workshops I had started in the autumn. Day after day they had gone on patiently sewing, without any payment, just for the pleasure of learning a craft and of doing something together. Now they turned with eagerness to sheets and mattress covers, shirts and shorts and dungarees and sweaters for the new boys. Then there was another mill room to get whitewashed—this time with boys to help—and a marquee to put up for a school. At last all was ready, and I could bring the first convoy.

I had wanted to take boys who had fled from the recent advances, and hearing that there were several children from Teruel in the village of Orihuela I sent a message to the mayor to assemble them with their mothers for me to inspect. But there was no one there when I arrived; the mothers were hiding their children away as from some new Herod. Sobered by this incident I went to Murcia. Here was something to restore my shattered confidence: mothers following me in the streets imploring me to take their sons. This was embarrassing in another way. I felt I must have some system of choice. Could I tell a mother her son had a disagreeable face, and so reject him? And what of Rubio and Don Pedro, our schoolmaster, who wanted, I knew, to get the cream and make a kind of Eton-Harrow farm colony? They had

laid injunctions on me only to take boys who could read and write. When I told them this a host of bright children began spelling out the newspaper to me and writing their names in slow, large letters. I was glad to think that I could take them out of their miserable refuges where they might get typhoid in the summer.

But there were two boys in the press that troubled me. One was a lost-looking creature, about thirteen, with a great shock of yellow hair that stood up straight like a stack of straw. The other was dark and had an old wrinkled face like a monkey's, though he was only fourteen. Both these boys were alone in the world; Monkey-Boy had fled from Malaga by himself, and Stack-of-Straw had lost his parents on the flight. They had lived in refuges, fed by local committees, fending for themselves, ever since. Could they read? They said they could, but, faced with print, not a syllable came out. I thought of Eton-Harrow and shook my head. The next day we started off merrily, the readers and writers and I in the American lorry, bound for the farm, but I often thought guiltily of the two abandoned boys. Still, I forgot them in the excitement of getting the new boys fed and washed and dressed in new clothes and bright knitted jerseys and introducing them all to their new comrades. I had chosen a day when Rubio was in Valencia and I could have things my own way.

The next morning we were sitting at breakfast when the door opened. It was a very odd apparition that looked in, yet I seemed to know it. Ragged, and dirty and staring—who was it? Then suddenly I saw on top of the staring face a stack of straw. "I've come," he said cheerfully; "there are three other chaps too, only they are limping a bit. We started yesterday and have been going most of the night." We rushed out, and there they were limping over the brow of the hill. Monkey-Boy and two little lads of ten. Forty miles on empty stomachs had not daunted them. Eton-Harrow must go by the board. No one could blame me now.

That night, when Rubio was back from Valencia, he looked sceptically round the supper table at my new importations, very bright with their new jerseys and clean faces, eagerly eating their bacon and beans and very much at home. "You have chosen some queer boys," he said laconically. Poor Rubio! I sympathised but I did not think my boys queer. Monkey-Boy and Stack-of-Straw had already been showing the stuff they were made of by chopping wood and singing the *flamenco*—a sort of Moorish song, very sad, Oriental and wild. Luckily Rubio had brought with him a young girl widow, Isobel, to teach the new

boys. Isobel was an ally. In a day or two she told me my special two were learning their letters rapidly. Even Rubio looked less sceptical and said, " we'll cut their hair and perhaps they'll do."

Rubio and the boys had put in good work on the terraces, and already there was a fine harvest of lettuces and broad beans. I knew that we depended on irrigation, yet I had no idea how this worked. Camping in Greece, I had heard the calls of irrigators through the moonlit night, had seen fields turned suddenly and inexplicably into lakes, and found my walks cut by rushing streams where yesterday were dry channels, but I had never understood how it was done. Rubio explained to me sadly that it was done in a very anti-social manner in our district : in fact water was put up to auction and went to the highest bidder. The Minister of Agriculture, Uribe, was a Communist, and he would not have the peasants hustled into collectivism. (Anarchists wanted social change to go on side by side with the war, but the Communists put the war first.) Many peasants had adopted collectivism on their own initiative : some villages had practised it for centuries, for Spaniards in many regions showed a special genius for communal effort. But not near Crevillente. There I took part in a ritual unchanged since the days of the Moorish occupation.

We needed water every ten days in the hot weather and every ten days Rubio had to go down to the Farmers' Syndicate in the village. Once he took me with him. About thirty peasants all dressed in black smocks, with serious, weather-worn faces, were assembled in a small room at the other end of which sat the auctioneer and a bell-ringer. The next twenty-four hours were put up for sale. The auctioneer went so fast and the peasants got in their bids so quickly that I was afraid we would remain without water, and I kept poking Rubio in great agitation till at last he went up to twenty pesetas an hour and the bell rang for us. He demanded four hours and we were told that the water would come at 7.25 the next day.

That morning the whole colony got up before dawn (the Spanish had pushed their time on two hours) and quickly swallowed cocoa and biscuits, for the business of irrigation is serious and exacting. I climbed up with Rubio and two of our boys to the tableland above the mill and watched while, with wooden boards and earth, they stopped up the outlets of the channels, down which the water would have gone briskly enough to a neighbouring farm if not prevented. In the meantime other boys were

working with feverish activity stopping up gaps and preparing new ones in the earth ridges of the top terrace, so that when the water came it would inundate first the lettuces and then the potatoes and onions. On the terraces below, with the same fever, other boys were transplanting tomatoes and pimentoes from the frames and putting in seeds of maize, melons and the soya bean. Then at last Pepe, our small black-eyed sentinel on the top of the hill, announced the water's coming, and there it was—a yellow, foaming stream rushing through cemented channels and dashing in cataracts over rocks. Someone was pumping it from the springs, and at 7.25 punctually it arrived. All were too much occupied for thanksgiving: there were no sounds but Rubio shouting directions on one terrace and Don Pedro on the other. At last it was over. The cataracts on the hillsides, the pools in the furrows of the potato field and round the pomegranate trees disappeared as mysteriously as they had come. Exhausted, we sat under a carob tree while Rubio read aloud to us the Spanish version of "Emile and the Detectives."

While these peaceful activities were going on at the Farm Colony, Franco's troops reached the sea and southern Spain was cut off from Barcelona, its nerve centre and the seat of the Government, which had moved there from Valencia during the summer of 1937. I booked a place in the Air France aeroplane which flew from Alicante to Toulouse and prepared to depart.

Before I left I had a talk with Don Marcelino, the school inspector of our district and a good friend to our work. He had helped us to find a carpenter instructor for our boys, and to buy goats, chickens and rabbits for the farm.

Don Marcelino was a Castilian, tall and commanding in presence and very handsome with large dark eyes and grey hair. He was a great power in the neighbourhood, where he had organised several model children's colonies. His evening science classes for the village boys and girls made him beloved. He belonged to the most moderate of the Popular Front parties. We were alone and I asked him to tell me frankly what he thought of the situation.

He said—"I know you are a friend to my country. I will not beat about the bush. We are in a ship in the middle of a storm. It looks as if the ship would sink. Well—we will go down fighting." I asked him if there were anything I could do for him personally.

He said, "thank you—no, there is nothing you can do. I received many invitations through the Ministry of Public Instruc-

tion in the last year to go to France, Belgium or England, to take charge of our children who are in those countries, but I could not make up my mind to go. There was so much to do here—and then, it is hard for a Spaniard to leave his country. It is difficult for you English to understand—you are great travellers. Our roots are as deep as the roots of dockweeds—it is a wrench even to leave our own region. And if I did not go, then, when our cause was prospering, I could not go now, in the hour of danger."

I said that it was very tragic to look on and be powerless to do anything. "It is far more tragic," he said, with sudden violence, "for us who see all we have striven for throughout our lives on the brink of destruction. For thirty years I have been a pioneer in educational reform. You do not know the darkness that existed in Spain—and it seemed as though the dawn were coming. But it has happened before. The Goths conquered Rome and yet civilisation survived and took other forms. Perhaps it must be. Perhaps it is right. How can we judge? After all, the essential can never die. But don't worry about me," he said—and his voice became kind and protective, as though I were in danger, not he. "Death is a little thing. And you mustn't think that I abandon hope. Franco has not won yet. You will come again in the summer and we will have a more cheerful talk."

IX. INTERLUDE IN SPAIN

Don Marcelino was right—I did go back in the summer, for the end in Spain did not come as soon as I had expected. After Franco had reached the sea and cut the road between Barcelona and Valencia, there was another long breathing-space. My friends in Spain wrote to me describing the air-raids in Alicante. It seemed horrifying that children should have to live in constant terror. I was teaching again, but had the summer holidays in front of me. I thought it ought to be possible to arrange a camp for some of them on a safe seashore, and I appealed for tents. Leighton Park School responded at once. I spent my spare time during the summer term dreaming of the camp, raising money for it and the Farm Colony by holding meetings and ordering food and equipment. I could no longer get to the south via Barcelona, but Air France service from Toulouse to Alicante was still running, and I arrived there at the end of July, 1938.

I came into Spain this time with many apprehensions, but they all vanished when I caught sight of the little crowd awaiting my arrival at the Alicante aerodrome. Barbara Wood from Valencia,

Rubio from Crevillente, Quakers and Mennonites from Murcia. The numbers of the American workers had increased in Murcia by this time. Some Mennonites, reminding me of old days in Petch, had joined the unit, and I could count on staunch allies among them for my projects: but the staunchest of all was an American Friend, Emily Parker. She was very small and very round. She was droll but wise. The shrewd blue eyes that looked out of her dimpled baby face sized up everything. I knew her well by this time and though I had often been exposed to the lash of her tongue, I felt when I caught sight of her that all my troubles were over. She would help me, I was sure, with transport and blankets and in all sorts of ways. She had tireless energy: would discuss the world till two o'clock in the morning but be up again at dawn. She had now taken Government colonies under her wing and was endlessly planning how to help everybody and not leave anyone out. She adored children. She looked as if she had been one herself not long ago.

I had had three months to think about the camp and the problems in connection with it, but the ones I had dreaded did not arise. The ships that carried my stores out to Valencia were not bombed and arrived in a minimum of time. The Governor of the Alicante Province gave his permission for the camp at once. It was war time and he might justifiably have been afraid of having foreigners on the seashore, but fortunately there was a sister hospital to the Murcia one at Alicante, supported by the American Friends and run by an Irishwoman. This hospital was a model and had deeply impressed the Civil Governor and made him favourable to undertakings sponsored by the Friends. We chose our beach a mile and a half from the fishing village of Benidorm. It had everything we needed—soft white sand and palm trees, rocks to climb about on, and immediately behind it a well of fresh water and shady pine trees. English lorries deposited on it the tents and poles, pots and pails, mattress covers and spoons, and the great sacks of beans, peas, lentils, rice and sugar, and the cases of cocoa, milk, jam and bacon that I had sent out from England. Then Rubio arrived with a little army of boys from the Crevillente Farm Colony. They put up the seven tents, made latrines, dug trenches for the stores, and wove roofs out of palm leaves to protect them from the sun. I could scarcely recognise the wild boys I had first known in the Murcia refuges. They had filled out and grown brown and handsome, but what was remarkable was Rubio's control of them. He had gained his ascendency without

any noise or fuss or show of discipline. He always worked harder than they did: he never had a softer bed or better food than they had, and he knew how to do things. Boys tell true coin from false. They don't want a man to be showy, but he must be genuine and have something he can teach them.

When the camp was nearly ready I went round Murcia collecting staff. Even that was easy. In August everyone wanted to flee from stifling Murcia. Everyone I invited to come with me, came. Even Alonso, the Spanish artist, to whom some English friends had given me an introduction, dropped the brush with which he was painting a life-size portrait of Lenin and joined the exodus. I wanted to keep Rubio and his brigade, but August was a busy month at the Farm Colony. They took their last long bathes and hurried back.

The problems came from the children. None of them had been used to community life nor was careful selection possible. Transport was so difficult and uncertain in Spain with the increasing shortage of petrol that when there was the chance of an American or English lorry, the children had to be seized at short notice. Luckily the mothers of Alicante were eager to get them away from air-raids. The Italian planes came over nearly every day from Ibiza, and though the deep shelters were very good and saved many lives, there were always casualties. There was practically no defence, for what fighting planes the Government had were at the front, and their few anti-aircraft guns were needed for places like Valencia.

The children were very wild. There were the fiercest quarrels. Every now and then hell would be let loose. Maruja had accused Luisa of throwing her sandal into the sea, Eduardo, Daniel of stealing grapes, Carmen had said that Manola shirked her share of washing up. This was done in the sea and considered a treat until it palled. The girls were the worst. I would find them yelling abuse at each other like women in slums, or locked together screaming, tearing each other's hair out, biting like mad dogs. Most of the quarrels were in the tents about mattresses or quilts, but I noticed that Elvira and Concha, after a grand set-to over a blanket, became inseparable friends. Concha, nick-named La Gordita (the little fat one) was a real neglected girl and quite savage. Like Monkey-Boy and Stack-of-Straw at the Farm Colony, she was alone in the world as she had got separated from her mother and brothers on the flight from Malaga. She was a girl of thirteen but developed for her age. When I found her she

was with Alicante people who were using her as a drudge and making her very unhappy. La Gordita was a good soul, willing to work and be helpful when she hadn't got a fight on. Elvira, also from Alicante, was tall and lovely. I was surprised to find that she could bite.

More difficult than the quarrelsome were the homesick. Most of them got over it, but Antonio, aged ten, was incurable. "Couldn't you stop crying, Antonio," I pleaded, "and try to enjoy yourself a little? I know you are a sensible boy." "I have no complaints," he replied sadly, "everyone here is very kind. At home there is very little food and here I have lots to eat and sea air and bathes are fortifying I know, but you see, my aunt is all alone and I don't know what she does without me. My aunt is not exactly old but still rather old—she is forty-eight—and now that there is no wood to buy I always used to go to the hills and gather sticks, and when there were potatoes I stood in the queue for them. The woman who lives in our house is a bad woman, though she is from Madrid, as we are, and my aunt has nobody but me." I promised Antonio that I would send him back in the English lorry when it came in three days' time and he promised not to cry any more—the time would not seem very long, he said politely—and we both kept our words, though I with sorrow.

Maria was another inconsolable. What did she do in the home she so longed to return to, I wondered. "I sweep," she said simply, but she cried so much that in the end I had to send her back to her broom, as Antonio to his sticks. Was this duty to their homes a way of explaining to themselves the fearful discomfort of being away from familiar surroundings? Partly, no doubt, but a sense of responsibility is common in slum children, who are usually initiated into the struggles of their elders while they are still small and tender-hearted.

The very little were another problem. Pepe, aged five, a gipsy from Tortosa, was a complete anarchist. He was always escaping. When everyone else was bathing or having his siesta or supper he would disappear. I spent my life looking for him. He would wriggle out of my hands screaming when I tried to wash from him the stains of the raw cocoa he had stolen. The staff I had collected were wonderful, but they were all of them busy, and it was difficult to fob Pepe off on to them. There was Esther, the daughter of missionaries in Cartagena, pretty, quick, neat, capable, and unshakably calm, but she was always surrounded by children

who wanted to be played with or taught their letters. There was the good Inez, the young dressmaker from one of the Murcia workshops, but she had to mend the torn shorts and bathing-gowns and clean the children's heads. There was Julio of seventeen, tall, strong, and with stentorian voice, but he had a rabble of ten-year-olds to hustle into chopping wood, making fires and drawing water, and keep from drowning. In the end Alonso was the best hand at Pepe. Alonso was an artist with children as well as paints—he was the most gentle and skilful nursemaid I have ever seen. Before long he had tamed Pepe, and made even our fierce little girls ashamed of fighting and swearing.

At first I had done the cooking. Hitherto my camping experience had been with two friends, but cooking for forty instead of three was only a matter of arithmetic I discovered—arithmetic and time. But after a while I didn't need to cook. Beside our well under a carob tree two fishermen were living, and they soon adopted us completely. They had fled from Cadiz at the beginning of the "Movement" because they were staunch Republicans, and they were now fishing at Benidorm. They ended by being our chefs. I learnt much about Mediterranean cooking by watching them—when to add flavours of bay leaf, saffron, pimento and thyme, the right way to clean fish, how to start the fire with withered cactus and go on with wood from the palm trees and roots of vine. Juan, the elder of the two, was an admirable Spanish type—tall, spare, weather-beaten, black-eyed, proud. Something in his gauntness and whole bearing suggested a Don Quixote of the people. If he had begun to talk about the holy age when all things were in common and the bees gave their fruitful crop without usury, and the clear streams their limpid waters, I should not have been surprised. But he did not talk much. Day after day he cleaned fish and cooked for us—a long business for forty, but he would never eat with us more than just a spoonful out of politeness. When I thanked him he told me that one of our children, Benita, a pretty curly-haired little girl from Madrid, reminded him of the daughter he had left behind him with his wife in Cadiz.

I often used to think about Juan. Fishing was precarious in war-time. He made little money at it and had no possessions, but he was quite content. If you live in a climate where a tree is shelter enough, you don't need to be greedy about possessions, but Juan's dignity impressed me. It was clear that he did not want to be anyone but himself, that he did not feel that he had any

superiors. Spanish pride that was called. I had noticed the same in Antonio, the driver who took me to Madrid, in Manolo in Murcia, and in Don Marcelino in Crevillente—indeed in all unspoilt Spaniards. In England this kind of integrity is rare. Perhaps it is difficult to preserve in an urban civilisation. Most people, at least at some time of their lives, feel insecure and inferior and try to be like those they consider superior to themselves. If they are intellectuals they are terrified of having the wrong tastes, of using the wrong formulæ; if they are workers or lower middle class, they want to live like good bourgeois.

Juan was glad that we had invaded the beach where he and his comrade had been living in solitude. Besides cooking for us he became our watchman and ran into the sea if he thought the little girls were playing their ring-a-ring-a-roses too far out in it, or clambered about the rocks to retrieve a lost child.

The peasants who lived behind our beach were tolerant of us, and never complained when the children stole their figs. We soon found that it was not necessary to guard the trench with our stores—no one stole from us, no one even asked us for anything, though Spain by this time was very hungry. The girls who slept in the tents among the pine-trees, some distance from the boys' camp which was on the shore, were never disturbed or frightened by passers-by. The coastguard called to see us in the evening, to know if we were all right, and tell me the news of the day. I often reflected with astonishment on the complete order that reigned. Once I mentioned this to the coastguard and he said, " yes, it is true—now. But you can't think what it was like to begin with. Awful things happened. It was horroroso—horroroso. There were people who seemed to have a thirst for killing, and the Government had no control over them. After a few weeks all was order again, but I shall never forget the beginning—it was horroroso."

But it was hard to believe in the horroroso, or even in the war, on that peaceful shore. Sometimes the camp was very idyllic and I was happier than I had ever been in Spain. There were days when the children seemed the most adorable beings in the world, with their stormy affection, their wild grace, their warm southern charm. Sometimes Alonso taught me the constellations in the quiet night, when the camp was asleep and there was no sound but the waves. I discovered that if I slept very near to the sea, not only did the sand make a soft pillow, but there were no

mosquitoes and no dew. In the sweltering afternoon I took my siesta under a tamarisk or the broad leaves of the fig tree.

Yet there were humiliating moments. We had many visitors at the camp, and on these occasions we always wanted to show up well. But usually something went wrong. When Garratt came he was so long over his bathe that the rice got burnt. When the English nurses from the Alicante hospital were with us there was a terrific wind and the sand got into the soup. But when we had a visit from an English delegate in central Spain I flattered myself that all was going well. The beans were tender, the sauce delicious, and there were muscatel grapes for dessert. The children, half-naked in their little sun suits, sitting round in a ring in the shade of the open marquee, looked brown and bonny and well-behaved. I was reflecting smugly on all this when my visitor asked me briskly if I hadn't any soap. I replied unwarily that I had brought a case from England. "Then why don't you wash the children?" she said. "I was just thinking how clean they looked," I said, "they're always in and out of the sea." "But that boy's back," she said, pointing with a menacing finger, "it looks as if soap hadn't touched it for a year."

When the time approached for my return to England and the break-up of the camp, we all became very sad. Mothers came out from Alicante and cried, first of all with pleasure because their children looked so plump and brown—so rico (rich)—and then with sorrow because the good would be undone when they went home. It was difficult now to get anything to eat. The starvation worried them more than the bombs. The boys were easy—we could squeeze them into the Farm Colony: Don Pedro liked having small boys. It was the girls who worried me. And then it all happened as in a fairy tale.

I had often noticed a spruce, white villa behind our beach. It was empty. The mayor of Benidorm gave me the address of the owner and told me to ask him if he would lend it. He consented, and then I had one last, quick scurry round in Valencia, buying tables and chairs and beds and simple furniture. The Delegate of Education in Alicante had befriended us already over the Farm Colony, and now he sent staff for this new venture. Before I left I saw thirty little girls from our camp installed in their new home.

When I was in Valencia buying furniture I had a chance of appraising its mood. It was much more confident since the Republican army had crossed the Ebro on the night of July 25th and felt itself protected from attack. They told me that the

peasants on the right bank of the Ebro had helped the Republican forces and that there was much guerrilla fighting in Franco's rear. The fishermen of Catalonia had voluntarily given up their boats to make the pontoon bridges. These were being bombed all the time, but the engineers mended them at night. The Ebro was, with Madrid, making the most daring and heroic chapter of the war, at what a heavy cost in casualties it was too soon to realise.

It was difficult to get a place on the aeroplane, and I had sworn that I would not be late for the beginning of the school term. But at Gandia, a port south of Valencia, the navy took me on to a cruiser bound for Marseilles.

Our cruiser was so large and imposing that it seemed disrespectful to call it light. There were thirteen of us—three sisters of the Spanish Medical Aid, who had been nursing wounded soldiers, and a delightful Spanish family from Jaen, with everything from a grandmother to a baby. The head of the family had been born in England and had an English passport, but had quite forgotten his native language. They were coming away because of the shortage of bread in Jaen, a dry district where little grew but olives, now on the brink of starvation. We were all technically refugees and were forrad with the men. They looked after all of us (including the Spanish baby) as tenderly as if they had been nursemaids. At first they talked to us in hushed voices, as to people who have been through nameless horrors, for they had been told that we were fleeing from Red Spain, and they looked on us with a certain awe.

One of them asked me to translate for him the love letters of a Spanish girl whom he had picked up in Majorca (the ratings and petty officers were allowed to land in Franco territory, but not in Government Spain). A crowd of men gathered round to listen. Enid, the youngest of the English nurses, joined us. She was a pretty girl, so well turned out that she looked in her right place in the neat navy. After the translations were finished and the usual jokes made, one of the men was bold enough to ask us about our adventures. They listened incredulously to my lyrical experiences, and still more to Enid's descriptions of the Spanish doctors with whom she had worked—so correct and chivalrous and protective of women—and the gay, uncomplaining, heroic Spanish soldiers whom she had nursed. It was no use our trying to put that stuff over on them, they said. They knew all about the Anarchists and the Russians in Red Spain, and that no decent person was safe there. " If you were allowed to land, you'd see

for yourselves," I said. "Ah, but we shouldn't care to land—not in Red Spain," a petty officer said gently. When we asked why, he said that there were things that couldn't be mentioned in the presence of ladies. The spectres of torture, rape and murder stalked across the deck, and everyone was silent for a moment. An officer passed the group, looked suspiciously at us, and told the men it was time for their siesta. "Yes, you know we ought to report you for this," one of them said jokingly. "This is Communist propaganda—this is. Haven't you seen the notice?" We had seen the notice. Anyone making Communist propaganda in the navy must be reported at once. "But we were talking to you about people—not politics." "Yes, but all the same it's propaganda for Red Spain, isn't it?" they said, and dispersed for the midday rest.

In the evening the Captain invited us aft to drink a glass of port with the officers. A cinema show was put on, for our benefit, they said politely. The officers were in white uniforms and looked dazzling. We were swept away by their splendour. For a moment we felt very proud and British. When the show was over the three nurses and I sat on a sofa and an elderly officer asked us if we would give them a song—it was so seldom they had ladies on board: it was quite an occasion. "But what if it were a revolutionary song?" Enid asked him, and the matter dropped. One of the nurses, a Scotswoman, found a compatriot and had a long talk with him. He was the only officer on that ship, he told her, who was not pro-Franco.

X. THE END IN SPAIN

That was my first but not my last trip with the navy. I had to go into Spain again at Christmas time. It was imperative to get to the two children's colonies for which I had made myself responsible. The American Friends were helping them in all sorts of ways, but by this time the hunger in southern Spain had greatly increased, and they were opening canteens for children in scores of different centres, and distributing food and clothing to the Government homes: their hands were full. I had to raise the money and support the colonies myself. The Air France had discontinued its service to Alicante. There was no way possible now except with the navy. I felt ashamed to trouble them, and when the British Consul at one port said to me severely "the British Navy is not a bus," I saw the point, but I had no alternative.

This time I had risen in social status—I was in a destroyer, aft with the officers, messing (a curious word for the neat navy) in the wardroom. The captain with exquisite courtesy lent me his cabin. But he told me when I got on board at Marseilles that he could only take me as far as Barcelona because he was picking up twenty generals there and conveying them to the south. These twenty generals belonged to the Commission which had gone to Spain at the request of President Negrin to evacuate the International Brigade. Negrin wanted to dispose of the fiction that foreign intervention on the Government side was equal to that on Franco's—in fact it is doubtful if there had ever been more than forty thousand volunteers in the Brigade, all told, compared with scores of thousands of Italian and German conscripts. (When the evacuation was completed, 12,673 foreigners were found to be in the service of the Republic.)

I was determined to be extra careful in the navy this time and only talk of neutral subjects. When the captain heard that I came from Birmingham and said in a reverent voice " the home of our Prime Minister," my " yes " was toneless. When he said that it was delightful to see the enthusiasm of the French for him I remarked that they called an umbrella a Chamberlain. Things seemed to be going all right. Left alone with the First Lieutenant, I thought scenery should be a safe subject, so I described the coast above Alicante where I had had a camp in the summer. The peasants and fishermen of that neighbourhood were of a very good type, I said, honest and friendly. " What ? " he said, " do you mean the Reds ? " " I don't think I understand what you mean by Reds," I said cautiously. " I was talking about ordinary human beings—peasants and fishermen." Conversation in the navy seemed beset with pitfalls.

Yet they were very kind to me. They did not laugh at my outrageous luggage, lengths of shirting and calico, tooth brushes, combs, needles, carpentry tools, medicines, bottles of disinfectant, and four hundred presents the children at the Birmingham school had given me for the children in Spain, took up a lot of room, but they alluded to it as " gear " and lifted it tenderly from jolly boat to destroyer.

At the time I was distressed at being ousted by the generals and landed in Catalonia, but later on I was glad because it gave me a chance of seeing the magnificent work the Friends were doing in Barcelona. They were living in a fine large villa on the outskirts of the city by this time. Their unit consisted of twelve foreign

workers, mainly English, and sixty Spaniards, and they were distributing food to just under 150,000 people. They had a fleet of twelve lorries to aid them in the task, for transport was one of the great needs of Spain. The main reason for the enormous expansion of their work was the formation at Geneva (largely through the efforts of Edith Pye) of the International Commission for the Assistance of Child Refugees in Spain. Twenty-four different governments had made contributions in money or goods towards the Commission's scheme of providing one hot meal a day to every refugee child in Spain. The scheme was being operated through the English Friends in Catalonia, the Swiss in the centre, and the American Friends in the south. Like the Friends, the Commission was non-political and was giving help to children on Franco territory as well. In addition to the Commission's food, large quantities of flour were ariving from America and being distributed in the form of bread to all the schools of Barcelona. The workers had been chosen with great care and were experts at their job, and the task of feeding these large numbers was carried on with quiet efficiency.

I shared a room with Dr. Audrey Russell, medical adviser to the Unit. She said to me—" I love the work here because it is so constructive. The Barcelona municipality decided that they would like the milk to be distributed through welfare centres, and this idea has spread to other towns : so I have been going about helping them to start them. We have brought in weighing-machines and babies' bottles from France. It is mostly our milk : dried, because that's more economical and safer for babies. They mix it at the centres. Tarragona is so badly bombed now that my welfare centre there is sixty-six feet below ground. But it is going beautifully. The Spaniards are admirable to work with—they are so quick to learn, and they have the loveliest babies."

There was another change in Barcelona. There was more religious toleration, and many services were held in the city. Some said that this was due to the influence of the Basques who are the purest Catholics of Spain. They had been loyal to the Government from the start, but they had lost the last inch of their soil in the summer of 1937, and many had escaped to Catalonia. Moreover, Negrin had promised religious toleration in his Thirteen Points.

But in spite of everything I was extremely depressed by the plight of Barcelona. The city was starving. People went about silently with drawn faces. They told me that the worst was the

discouragement of the men at the front. For a long time soldiers had been much better fed than civilians, but now their rations were short, and they never ceased worrying about their wives and children at home. The end is near now, I thought. The Mission workers did not agree with me. They were too busy to notice the desperateness of the situation. "You were a defeatist last April," they said, "and you were wrong." "It was a miracle that I was wrong then," I said, "still, at that time something might have happened in the international situation to turn the scales, but Munich extinguished any chance of that sort. The end is not far now."

The next destroyer I caught was on Christmas Day, 1938. She was bound for Gandia and was a very cosy ship. At midday the petty officers came into the wardroom to drink beer and chaff the captain. I made friends with an old salt from Dorset. He asked leave to show me over the boat; the captain said "granted," and I was initiated into all sorts of mysteries, of which I had not the slightest comprehension, but which filled me with awe. The officers on this destroyer were very genial—it was considered the best pub in the flotilla, they told me, and nicknamed the —— Arms. Some of them were sympathetic with Government Spain and not afraid to talk about it. She went down off Dunkirk in 1940. Of the three destroyers I sailed in that Christmas time, not one has survived this war.

I felt as though I were saying good-bye to old friends when I was put off in the jolly boat at Gandia.

My memory of that last expedition to Spain is full of blurred pictures: the wild shrieks of welcome from the girls at Benidorm, ecstatic games on the sands in the bright winter sunshine, the welcome, soberer but very kind, from the boys at Crevillente and hundreds of refugees surging round me in Murcia. It seemed to them a kind of omen of hope that I had come again into Spain. Most people knew the situation was pretty desperate—still, if I could come in with little Christmas presents for everybody, perhaps after all things were normal. Manolo kept his erect dignity and assurance—Don Marcelino was calm and unmoved. I knew that I should never see them again. I could not shake off the sense of doom nor be reconciled to the fate that I knew was coming to these proud and noble human beings. Soon they will be sacrificed like bulls in the arena, I thought.

The children's hospital at Murcia was in wonderful shape. It had been run for more than a year by Dorothy Morris, a New

Zealand nurse. Dorothy was tall and good-looking. She had the open, unself-conscious manner, the spontaneity and disregard of class distinction that made one realise at once that she had not been born in England. I had known girls from Barbados who were the same. (Is it our grey skies that make us the shyest people in the world ?) To train as a nurse in her country had not been the heavy weather that it is in ours. She had studied at the university first, and when she took up nursing had lived in a probationers' hostel which was like a college, where there was plenty of time off for surf bathing, tennis and social life. This did not mean that her standards were lower than ours. Whenever I went to it, the hospital, full as it was, looked a model—the marble floors scrubbed, the children neat and clean, with white bows in their hair, the convalescents in the garden, or having lessons with a Spanish teacher.

" But we've had a terrible time," she said. " At one point we had measles, typhoid, meningitis and diphtheria all at the same moment, but no cross-infection and very few deaths. When I came there was friction between the English nurses and Don Alfonso, our doctor. The Spaniards believe in injections much more than we do. Well, perhaps they are right. They say ' plunk it in—then you're sure it gets there. If you give it by mouth, half the time the children spit it out.' But injections frighten children, and our nurses rebelled. But I wouldn't have it. If you work in a foreign country, you've got to follow its system. When I was nursing the soldiers at the front here I was horrified because they put the wounded limbs into plaster of Paris and wouldn't let me dress them. They said that rest was what mattered. A new method, evolved by Dr. Trueta, and I must say it was very successful.

" Then there were the Spanish chicas (girls) from the refuges. They had no idea of nursing at first because that had always been done by nuns, and by the Practicantes who feel themselves halfway to doctors and too grand to do ordinary jobs. But the nurses the Friends sent me from England are very good and we are determined to teach the chicas properly. We must leave a legacy to Spain. There is not a technique they do not know now. They have responsibility and take it in turns to go the round with Don Alfonso and take his orders. They have come on very well. They love it. They put on their white coats and a bit of lipstick and are all set. I have had to insist on regular discipline. Time has been the difficulty. They have no idea of it—several of them

can't read the clock. They are mostly illiterate, you see. But they adore children. Babies are kings and queens in Spain.

" I said to Don Alfonso once that it was a pity that the Senoritas didn't take up nursing. He gave me an icy look and shrugged his shoulders. A pity—but so it was. A girl of good family wipe the behind of a refugee child ? Of course, they think of these children as Reds. Murcia is full of Fifth Columnists, who are longing for Franco's entry. Don Alfonso's assistant is probably the head of their Phalange—he has said some odd things to me sometimes.

" Food has been very difficult. The International Brigade, who used to help, disappeared at twenty-four hours' notice in April—they got up to Barcelona just before the road was cut, except a few sick and wounded. I'll never forget that departure. It was tragic."

In the middle of January I climbed on to a destroyer for the last time. I stood on the deck staring at Spain and trying not to think. I was woken from my reverie by a voice beside me saying, " how delightful it is to see a crown again, isn't it ? " A middle-aged Englishwoman, carefully dressed and wearing a hat (this had been given up in Government Spain) was gazing upwards in rapture. She had found a crown somewhere—I'm not sure now where.

I asked her about the food situation in Valencia—she had been working in a diplomatic office. She told me she knew nothing about it as they lived outside and all their food was brought in by our fleet. They had had the usual Christmas feasts and noticed nothing. We chatted vaguely. When she heard that the last time the Navy had taken me out of Spain I had been evacuated with a Spanish family, she explained in horror. " They had English passports," I said lamely. " Yes, but still they were Spaniards. How awful for you ! " she said, and she looked at me with pitying eyes.

A few minutes after we had sailed, an Italian squadron came and bombed the harbour. We escaped, but it was a foretaste of things to come.

CHAPTER 10

WITH REFUGEES IN FRANCE IN 1939

I. THE CAMPS

I arrived back in Birmingham in the middle of January. After that, events in Spain happened quickly. On January 20th Franco's troops were within twenty-nine miles of Barcelona, and the flight from the city began. The Republican armies fell back to Tarragona, then to Barcelona, and finally to Figueras and the Pyrenees. On January 26th Barcelona fell. Along with the rest of the world, I read in the newspapers of the appalling scenes on the frontier. The French Government, in a panic, gave orders and counter orders. They thought of Spaniards as Reds and were terrified that they would spread revolutionary ideas in France. At first no one was to be allowed over—then only women and children. At Cerbère the tunnel which carried the railway under the pass from France to Spain was blocked by Republican soldiers. On the road there were thousands more. The French sent their black troops, the Senegalese, with orders to sweep them back into Spain. There were the same scenes at every frontier post along the Pyrenees : the Senegalese, even with fixed bayonets, were powerless to stem the tide. Only machine guns could have done it. Fortunately even the French Ministers most friendly to Fascism and most nervous of offending Hitler and Mussolini and of revolution—and there were many of them—were too humane to order the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of fugitives. The frontiers were opened and half a million refugees poured into France.

It was easy for the world, who were not faced by the same problem, to criticise the way in which the French dealt with it. The men—there were about 250,000 of them—were put into improvised camps, mostly on the seashore, near Perpignan. The rest, chiefly women and children, were scattered all over France. They were housed in barracks, fortresses or prisons, and a few in private houses. Conditions everywhere were primitive and, in some cases, very bad. The French Government was saddled with a burden which was an enormous strain on its housing capacity as well as on its budget. The half million refugees cost them at least £40,000 a day, but they would not accept money

from our Government (except through the Red Cross for clothing) because they did not want interference. Their intention was to send the Spaniards back as fast as possible; but many refused to go.

The south of Spain held out for two months longer, but on March 28th Madrid surrendered. For the Republican armies of the south and the thousands of officials who had worked for the "cause," as they called it, there was no escape. Many fled to the ports, hoping for ships, but there were no ships and they were captured by Franco's troops and slaughtered. Emily Parker, who came out later, told me how Manolo and Don Marcelino had remained at their posts and had been arrested immediately, after which there was no word heard of them. She had no doubt but that they were among the many thousands who were shot. The Phalange ordered the immediate evacuation of the children's hospitals at Murcia and Alicante. The evacuation of the Farm Colony and the Girls' Home at Benidorm did not present such problems as the children were not ill, and the American Friends, with their superb care for the individual, saw to it that every child arrived back at his own home, or was properly provided for.

I had begun to worry about Rubio as far back as April, 1938. I knew that as a Jew and an anti-Nazi German there would be no hope for him when Franco's troops reached Crevillente. The American Friends undertook to look after him, and they were as good as their word. They made arrangements for him to go to Switzerland and got him out by ship from Valencia just before the fall of Madrid. Then suddenly I had a letter from him—from the camp at Argelès. The Swiss had refused to admit him because his visa had been given by the Republic and in the meantime they had acknowledged Franco. The French police sent him into Argelès, along with the other refugees from Spain.

As soon as the Easter holidays started I went to Perpignan. I wanted to see if I could get Rubio out of Argelès and help in the work for the other refugees.

As I was passing through Paris I met a Frenchwoman who asked me to explain why the Spaniards had come. "The little towns in the Pyrenees were just preparing for their season," she told me, "now they are swamped with all these dirty refugees. Why didn't they stay at home?" Perhaps in 1940 she asked the same question of her compatriots.

I found the relief workers at Perpignan swamped with problems. The National Joint Committee was making plans to get

thousands of Spaniards out to Mexico. Dr. Audrey Russell, representing the International Commission and the Friends, was trying to cope with milk for babies, clothing for half-naked women and children, medicines for the sick and dying, cultural and occupational materials for the living, and a dozen other things.

The day after my arrival was a Sunday and I wrote in my diary: " . . . It is Sunday and the Perpignan office is shut, but people leak into our hotel. Five come in together—three saucy fellows with dancing eyes, and two older and sadder, all very shabby. Can we give them tickets for clothes? They have nothing but what they are wearing. Escaped from the camps? They grin assent. If the police catch them they will put them back or in prison. They have no papers. They know that, but think they will not be caught. How will they live? The gay small one with fair curly hair has an excellent tenor voice, they say. The tougher fellow is a 'footballist'; the dark one from Madrid was a cartographer; the sad tall one was a pilot in the Merchant Marine—he will go somewhere on the coast and fish, he says—and the other sad one was a pilot in the air force. They all think they can pick up a living somehow, though heaven knows it is only a question of hours or days before they will be caught and put back into the dreary sand burrows of Argelès or the hard labour of Collioure. 'We are encouraging brigandage, I suppose,' says Dr. Russell with a sigh as she gives them tickets for shirts. 'And if you are going to give them coppers for bread and cheese, don't let me see it,' she adds."

I had read such terrible accounts of the camp at Argelès that I dreaded seeing it. I knew that eighty thousand men were herded together on that part of the Mediterranean shore where there were no trees or vegetation, that there was no shelter except for the sick, that they had been exposed to the bitter east winds of February and March, that when they tried to dig they came in three feet to water, so that their dug-outs were cold and wet, that the drinking water was brackish, that for weeks there were no latrines, that hundreds had fallen ill—or died—of pneumonia, dysentery, typhoid or of gangrene due to untended wounds.

Dr. Russell drove me to the camp. As we were going along she said, " since those last days in Barcelona and the flight to France I have seen such awful things that I have no feeling left. I have become an automaton. I am very busy—I do things, but it is like sleep-walking. There has never been anything as horrible as this since the Middle Ages. Thousands of men have died who might

have been saved, if they had had proper medical attention. The French authorities refused all help at the beginning. They turned away the Swedish Red Cross vans that had come to save the wounded. They seized the Spanish ambulances, mobile operating theatre and hospital instruments and would not let them be used. Spaniards were wounded not only in the recent fighting, but in the autumn on the Ebro front, where their casualties were terribly high. They needed treatment but they received either none or what could be given in French hospitals like those Florence Nightingale found in Scutari. And we were not allowed to help. People with great tenacity like ourselves have eventually received permits to enter the camps and bring amenities, but they are still very suspicious of us.

" Often their apparent inhumanity is lack of imagination. The gardes mobiles tore away wives and children from their men because they were told to send them to places where they would have roofs over their heads. They should have explained this through loud-speakers. Refugees are not cattle. Plans should be explained to them—they will co-operate if asked to do so. On the other hand, some of the authorities felt that it would make things simpler if a great many died. One French deputy said when he heard of the conditions in Argelès, ' ah well, hunger and cold will settle the matter for us, little by little.' Perhaps he was right, but I should like to see the French when their turn comes. Only, of course, it won't come to men like him, but to the innocent people he will sell. It won't affect me—as I said I haven't any feeling left."

I looked at Dr. Russell's strong, sensitive face, and the rose-petal flush in her cheeks and said, " let's pretend you haven't anyway."

" The end in Barcelona came so suddenly," she went on. " I know you were pessimistic when you were there, but even when Franco's troops were near, we thought that the city was going to be defended, like Madrid. But it would only have prolonged the anguish uselessly. I used to stand on our roof watching the planes coming over in waves machine-gunning the harbour. They were like clouds of obscene grey flies. Columns of smoke rose into the sky after they had dived. They were preventing the troops from embarking and setting oil dumps and warehouses on fire. Then the evacuation began, but it was very silent and very orderly. We had a staff meeting and decided that we must go on feeding the mothers and children as long as possible, and that

half of us would go to Gerona and half stay in Barcelona. That night I went down into the city for the last time. There was a strange stillness in it—just a few cars going very quickly and the trams standing about deserted. There was no looting, no disorder. The Catalan Guards in their red-lined blue cloaks and white alpargatas were patrolling the streets, swinging lanterns. They kept order till the end, though they knew that they would be shot at once when Franco came. That was Monday.

" The next day, the half of us who were leaving collected Spaniards whom we knew to be in danger and left in our lorries and cars, and joined the procession that was winding out of Barcelona to the north. There must have been about a quarter of a million people in it, and vehicles of every sort from armoured cars and ambulances to mule-carts and ox-waggons—you can imagine the jam on the roads, but there was no panic, no disorder. The motorised police passed up and down telling people not to get out of their places, but to proceed with due formality, and that all would arrive at their destination—you know the rather hieratic way Spaniards express these things.

" I wanted to get to a colony of Basque children for whom I felt responsible and warn them to get out at once, on foot if necessary. They were big boys, and I was afraid they might try to defend themselves and that would have been the end of them all. I left the others and drove back in my car along the coast road. At first it was empty, and then I met the army retreating up it. They made way for me to pass. Then suddenly planes swooped out of the sky and started bombing and machine-gunning. I got out of my car and lay down beside the wall of a house. Two women came out of it and asked me to shelter there, and I spent the night with them. Their husbands were fighting, and they kept asking me ' is it true we are defeated ? ' And they said, ' ai, Señor, ai Señor—Lord help us, Holy Mary, Mother of God pray for us.' You know how the old prayers come back to Spaniards in such moments. ' Now and in the hour of our death,' they said. I went out under the stars and sniffed up the salt sea and sage and pine-resin and thought ' this is the last time I will have this smell of Spain.' At dawn I went on, and this time I came to soldiers who had flung away their rifles and their baggage and were toppling the cars that had no petrol left over the cliffs. ' Now is the time for them to topple me over too,' I thought, ' and seize my car '—for there was still petrol in it and they looked as if they were in a hurry, but they just waved me on.

Then I came to a breach in the road and could go no farther. I got out, abandoning my car, and went down to the beach. It was Caldetas where our Minister used to be, but his house was shut. I sat down on the sands and waited for Franco. I fell asleep but was awakened by a voice saying, ' 'Ere, pull that rope tighter.' I saw two sailors in a jolly-boat and they rowed me out to the *Devonshire*, and so I came to France.

" Later I discovered that the Director of the Basque Home had taken all the boys to the frontier—so I needn't have bothered. I went into Spain again to Gerona to open canteens for the refugees. We were bombed again and again. The horror and confusion that did not exist in the first stages of the retreat came at Gerona and on the frontier. We waited two days and nights there—it poured all the time, and there was no shelter. But the camps were worse even than that for the poor refugees, who thought they'd be in heaven when they got to France."

At this point of Audrey's narrative we were stopped by French sentries outside Argelès. Our permits were in order and they allowed us to go in.

It is impossible to imagine what eighty thousand men herded together behind barbed wire look like if one hasn't seen it. I wanted to cover my eyes—it was a sight so wounding to human dignity. Men penned into cages like wild animals ; exposed to the stare of the passer-by, like cattle in the market place. But later I saw other camps, and I discovered that Argelès, though the worst of all, was in one way better—it was more human. It was completely unregimented, except by the men themselves. By April, when I saw it, everyone had made some kind of shelter for himself : out of blankets, rags, bits of tent, corrugated iron, but mostly by burrowing in the sand. The men themselves with the protective instinct of animals had taken the colour of the heavy, greyish sand on which they lived and were less noticeable than in other camps.

We asked for Rubio and a man with a loud-speaker went about calling for him. Then suddenly he came towards us, still dressed in his blue overalls and looking astonishingly bright and clean amongst that drab multitude. He told us his misadventures—but these no longer seem extraordinary when half a million share them with you—and he hurried through them, smiling his ironic smile. I told him I would try to get him a visa for England, and then went on with Dr. Russell to visit the rest of the camp.

We went into the huts which were called hospitals and which

were so crowded we could scarcely move through them. The men were mostly lying on the sand. Some were sitting up eating lentils, but most were too weak to move. They were suffering from pneumonia, kidney disease, dysentery, unhealed wounds. Most of them were Spaniards, but there were a number of International Brigaders—Germans, Austrians, Czechs, Italians—all men whose countries were lost to them. Dr. Russell made lists of the invalid foods and medicines that were needed and promised to send them.

"And now I'll show you something cheerful," she said. Dr. Russell knew her way in that city of eighty thousand sand-burrows, and even the French military could not keep track of her once she had got inside. The next thing I knew we were in a little office in one of the huts belonging to the French, talking to a stout, expansive lawyer from Madrid. He was sitting on a chair in front of a table and a typewriter. I could scarcely believe that a Spaniard had been granted such status—the officers had all been told by the French when they arrived that they were nothing now and could not give commands or organise their men—but he told me proudly that the French had allowed him to become the Chief of the civilian section of the camp, and that he was in charge of sixteen thousand men: officials, doctors, lawyers, professors, schoolmasters and workmen. The Chief had once run a factory and was a great organiser. Now he was turning his genius on to the sand-dwellers. The great thing, he said, was to keep up morale. He had already got a choir going, adult classes and sports groups, but what they needed was musical instruments, footballs, paper and pencils, books and tools for workshops. We promised to get them for him. Then he took us round the civilians' camp. If we could get him wood he would build a theatre and cultural centre here, and workshops for barbers, carpenters and cobblers there. He was already giving prizes for cleanliness, works of art and feats of ingenuity. Here was a war memorial out of pebbles, the lettering in red beans—its maker had been given a cup. There the tomb of Tutankhamen (a piece of soap for that), and there two weathercocks, an aeroplane made out of sardine tins and a little man smoking a pipe carved out of wood (spoons for both those). But his greatest pride was the hut built out of reeds, made by some fishermen from Santander. It was tall enough to stand up in, and there were seventeen men living in it. They had stolen along the shore at night to the mouth of the Tech and gathered the reeds (the French had since put sentinels

to prevent others doing the same). They had made a covered verandah and kitchen where they cooked their own rations.

Dr. Russell asked the Chief if he did not want a visa for Mexico or England; a man of his ability would get on anywhere. But there was too much for him to do in the camp. "It is of great import that I should stay," he said simply.

As we went out through the camp men pressed round us. Was there any news about the ship for Mexico? Mexico was their heaven now. A few had been promised England. Had the visas come through? A tall, bald man about fifty stopped us, clicked his heels and bowed. He was ashamed to trouble us, but his wife was still in Barcelona. Could we get news of her? He gave his name—Colonel So-and-So. He had the manners of a Spanish grandee, but there was anguish in his eyes.

Dr. Russell took me next to les Arênes, formerly a bull ring, just outside the main camp. Here there were one hundred and sixty children and two hundred women. They were not supposed to be there but the women had husbands in the camp and had threatened to kill themselves if they were moved, and the French had given in.

Among the women was a girl with a shaven head. She had a clear, strong face and bright, dark eyes; even baldness did not make her ugly. I asked for her story. She told it with calm detachment.

"I came three days ago," she said, "from near Gerona. Escaped at night over the mountains. I couldn't stay there any longer. The Phalangists captured my brothers and my uncle and shot all three. They asked me where my husband was. I knew he was here at Argelès but I wouldn't tell them. They ordered me to come to their headquarters next morning. There were eighty of us, young girls and women. They said we must have our heads shaved or go to prison. I said I would go to prison, but they said I might never come out, and my hair would grow again in three months. They didn't do all the eighty. Some of them were crying so much, their hearts failed them."

Before we left we tried to see the French commandant of the camp. He was not there, and we spoke to one of his subordinates. Could we make a welfare centre where the babies could have milk, equip a school for the children, set up a sewing workshop for the girls? "What," he said, with supreme scorn, "you want to make a school for Spanish children? You are serious—for Spanish children? It is very nice, très joli, charmant de votre

part, but really you are wasting your time." "But Monsieur le commandant," I said, trying to keep my temper, "even Spaniards are human beings." "These Spaniards—these Reds," he said violently, "they are rats, vermin, worse." But we could give them what we liked, he said. We told him we would return in two days' time.

We went back to Argelès with a car full of materials for the Chief's cultural projects but he was not there. We went to the non-Spanish section but Rubio too had disappeared. We went to the military police. They told us that they had been sent to the mediæval fortress of Collioure, the punishment camp. Why? They didn't know. There was no charge against them. Rubio had been denounced, perhaps; the Chief too active in raising morale: it was suspicious, no doubt, that they had talked to foreigners. The French were copying the Fascist system of concentration camp and imprisonment without trial. It took Dr. Russell and me two months' hard work to get the two men visas and travelling permits, and out of their misery to England.

I visited a camp for women and children near Pau and gave them wool and sewing machines and materials for making clothes. I consulted the mayor of the town about it first, and received his enthusiastic permission. He was a lawyer with a refined, sensitive face. He had had to put the Spanish women and children into a disused factory, but he allowed them to go about the town freely (in most places they were guarded by sentinels), and was anxious to do all he could to alleviate their misery. This is the true France, cultured, humane, I thought, the France that believes in freedom and human dignity. And I saw that France, like Spain, was cleft from top to toe—that under its peaceful surface something was going on that resembled civil war. "What do you think will happen if war with Germany comes?" Dr. Russell asked me. "I don't know whether even war can weld them together now," I said.

II. OUTBREAK OF WAR IN FRANCE

It was harrowing to have only my holidays for the refugees in France, but in England I appealed for books for them and cultural materials, and many people were sympathetic and gave generously. When I came back to France at the beginning of August, 1939, I found that aid to the internees had expanded enormously. The National Joint Committee was helping Spanish organisations to get some thousands out to Mexico. Howard Kershner, an

American Quaker, was directing the activities of the International Commission, and with the help of volunteers who had already worked in Spain, was making life easier in every camp in France.

Considering that it was a voluntary society, the work of the International Commission was highly impressive. By the spring of 1940 (for it went on working during the war) it had dispensed about half a million pounds, either in kind or money, but the work it accomplished was not only material. When the Spaniards said—" we thought that we were fighting for the world, but the world forgot us—all except the International Commission and the Quakers," they were not thinking of the clothes or razor blades that had been given them. The people who brought them this help spoke their language, respected and liked them, and left no stone unturned to get them out of their intolerable conditions. The women and children alone were dispersed in nearly two thousand different places in France, and delegates of the Commission, travelling in small trucks loaded with supplies, visited nearly all these camps, distributing clothes, medicines and school equipment, and giving advice and encouragement. The Commission supported entirely eleven children's colonies containing over five hundred boys and girls. They assisted hundreds of men to become self-supporting and brought their families out of the camps to live with them.

I saw a corner of this vast work from the vantage point of Perpignan: a very considerable corner as most of the men's camps and a number of the women's were near there. There was not only Argelès, but Barcarès, St. Cyprien and many more.

In August I found Dorothy Morris, whom I had last seen in Murcia, running the Commission's office there (Dr. Russell had returned to England). She was turning her dynamic energies on to helping the individuals who came to her for advice, and to improving the camps. She had discovered bookshops in Paris which specialised on works in Spanish and, with the help of a colleague, arranged for circulating libraries of thousands of volumes for Argelès and the other camps. Adult classes in complicated technical, as well as more elementary, subjects were kept going full blast; workshops for men and women and schools for children were equipped and organised, milk and foods supplied to about four thousand infants, and drugs and equipment to emergency hospitals.

The son of a diplomat working at Perpignan was making bright suggestions to our War Office. Why not bring the Spanish air-

men over to England and use them in the war that was coming? Why not take a contingent to fortify Cyprus? They were all eager to volunteer. It was a stupid waste of experienced man-power to leave them to rot in the French camps when we were on the eve of war ourselves. But Chamberlain was still in power, and these suggestions cut no ice.

I visited the camp of Gurs a number of times. This was a vast city of hutments on a tableland a little north of the Pyrenees. In the winter it was a sea of mud, in summer parched and dry. It was unspeakably dreary, but the huts were properly built, the food adequate—it was a great advance on Argelès. "And yet," as a young Austrian said to me, "it's sadder. We had the sea at Argelès and that was somehow consoling." There were many Basques in this camp, and a large contingent of airmen, but I knew the International Brigaders best. The Central Europeans amongst them had an excellent organisation and had arranged a great variety of courses, many in technical subjects. I was able to purchase materials for these and was heartened because the men I talked to seemed so full of energy and enterprise. The future that awaited them was mercifully hidden from our eyes. When I said good-bye to my friends in Gurs I did not see the awful years in front of them—in the mines of Morocco or building a railway for Hitlerised France over the burning sands of the Sahara in conditions indistinguishable from the slavery of the ancient world. This was to be the lot, not only of the International Brigaders, but of the Spaniards who, at the outbreak of war, joined the new Foreign Legion and fought for France. Such was the reward of sacrifice, which was to be offered them by Pétain and his Vichy colleagues. Many of them died, but still more survived and—after some delay—were released to fight again with their Allies, when North Africa was freed.

The month of August, 1939, was a time of stress and strain, of rumours and counter rumours in France as in England. But the man in the street never believed that there would be war. Even officials, supposedly well-informed, would tell one that they had been dining with some general in Paris who had told them to calm their wives: it would all be arranged.

All the same, partial mobilisation and the evacuation of women and children from Paris began about the middle of the month. Everywhere men were slipping away quietly from their jobs; at every street corner one saw bands of them, armed not with guns but with suit-cases for sending back their civilian clothes. But all

that was not serious—it was only " pour faire courir les gens," as my hotel chambermaid said. On September 1st the atmosphere changed and tension increased. The early morning wireless in Perpignan announced that Germany had invaded Poland. In the town people had drawn faces and talked to each other in whispers.

I felt that the only thing to do was to go on working as though nothing were happening, so I went to Béziers, about sixty miles from Perpignan, to buy bedding and sandals for the Spanish refugees. I had discovered a nest of nearly eight hundred women and children in a deserted tumble-down factory up in the hills not far from Béziers. The main part of the building was a shed, open at the sides. Here seven hundred people were sleeping, many without blankets or mattresses. They had just arrived, evacuated in a hurry from the more commodious shelter they had been occupying up till now, to make room for evacuees from Paris. On my first visit I had taken along knitting wool, sewing machines and materials, and had been warmly welcomed by the kind old mayor, who was himself a tailor—but he was frantic because of the lack of bedding and of shoes.

That was why I found myself in a department store in Béziers at midday of September 1st at the moment when general mobilisation was announced in France. When I asked for a hundred blankets the shop girls looked at me with suspicion. Here was some dubious foreigner beginning already to hoard and profiteer. They said that the military had requisitioned them that morning. I explained that they were for Spaniards—but Spanish Republicans at the moment were supposed to be to blame for everything. No one knew quite why, but weren't they the allies of Russia, who the newspapers said was the greatest traitor of history. They then said that there was no transport any more—no buses nor trains nor anything. I said that I had lived through wars before, and that these things functioned again after a while. Then I got angry and flourished my passport and said that France and England were in for it now and had better stick together. Suddenly the shop was transformed—blankets came out of hiding, material for mattresses appeared in unlimited quantity, sheets and pillowcases for the sick, and hundreds of sandals.

I was sorry I had been cross. Girls came up from the basement red-eyed, a shop-walker, a man about forty, the only male left, looked in front of him with a dazed expression: I heard someone breathe " c'est la fin."

To do the French justice, their mobilisation was speedy,

thorough and democratic. Every man between the ages of eighteen and forty-eight disappeared from his place—sous-préfets, mayors, priests, pastors, peasants, factory owners. There were only women, children and old men left in the towns and villages of France. The new sous-préfets and mayors looked blank and shrugged their shoulders when asked about the movements of Spanish refugees. They knew nothing—they had just been appointed. They were worried old men, recalled from retirement. At one village I could not buy bread because the baker had been mobilised, at another the restaurant was shut because the butcher had gone. Individual life, choice, responsibility, had all been swept away. As Bernanos puts it, the men had been given tickets for hell and their only anxiety was lest they miss the bus and be late in arriving there.

It was painful travelling about France in those first days of war—not because anything awful was happening; contrary to expectation there were no air-raids and all was quiet on the front—but because of the look of doom on every face. It took me forty-eight hours to go from Perpignan to Paris in trains that stopped at every station. There I saw France in miniature: on the up-lines, Red Cross trains, armoured cars, cattle trucks filled with soldiers, open waggons with shells and machine-guns, train-loads of horses, mules and cows, and on the down line, old men, women and children dressed in the costume of Alsace and clutching the little bundles which were all they had been allowed to take from their abandoned homes.

In our crowded third-class compartment people talked freely and without compunction. "We went off singing in 1914," an old man said, "but nobody sings now." "It's not that I despair," I heard a young wife retort to a soldier who was telling her not to cry, "but I just think of all he has to go through, and it gets into my veins." "And the Russians—yes, the Russians," a factory woman was saying, "well, that's what the Government wanted—what they have been working for. Now they are against us too." "Yes, the Government has betrayed us—but we'll have to be careful what we say now, I suppose." "I've only been married three months—if only it could have come later," a woman in the corner was sobbing. A young soldier laughed suddenly, "et tout ça pour Danzig." "It's for our own existence, you fool," an older man retorted, "and this time we'll leave only stones." "We deserted the Spaniards," a woman who had been silent so far said in a dispassionate voice—she had probably been

repeating the same thing for three years—" they were the first to fight Fascism, but we let them go down alone. Now it's our turn."

I wondered if I should ever be able to shake off the sense of doom: the feeling one had had in Spain during the last year of the war. It was not only the people. Shopkeepers and factory owners, suddenly transformed into smart French officers, had said good-bye to us in Perpignan with tears in their eyes and trembling lips. Simon, our special friend, very kind to the Spaniards, told us as we drank his health in farewell, that his wife had sobbed at his side all night and that he was exhausted and unnerved. " Yet perhaps I'll come back—who knows," he said, " perhaps I'll be lucky and only be wounded or taken prisoner." There were no false heroics in France at the outset of war.

Before setting out for Paris I had gone to see Ivan, a Russian boy I had temporarily adopted some ten years earlier and sent to school in Birmingham. He was farming two hundred miles north of Perpignan, but posts were so disorganised that I could not let him know that I was coming. Ivan had been sent with his mother out of the south of Russia when he was a small child to escape from famine and civil war. I had found him a handsome, responsive boy of fourteen, in a café in Paris, earning his living as *plongeur* (washer-up) and trying to go on with his studies in his free time. He had learnt Latin but had never done philosophy. I took him back with me. Soon he was reading Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Kant when he ought to have been doing his geography and algebra for Matric. " I have so little time," he used to say, " soon I'll have to be earning to support my mother."

Ivan's farm was in a cleft of the hills four miles from the market town. It was not well known, but at last I found a woman who could direct me. " You are looking for the Russians —the mother with her son? Ah, ma pauvre madame, but it is far away and a steep climb. It is right in the hills. Turn to the left after the two barns and go over the stream on the wooden bridge. But—he has enlisted, the young man. You won't find him there now."

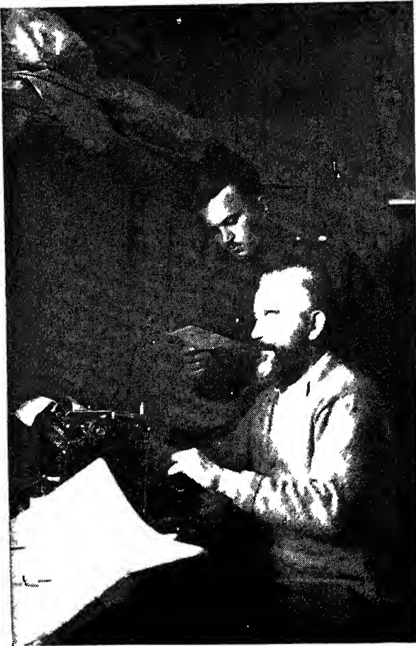
" Serve you right," I addressed myself. " You have been looking on calm and collected at the anguish of France ever since mobilisation began—now you know, a little, what it means." And I thought of all the things I had been through with Ivan: the long conversations we had had on Napoleon when he had first

come and used to spend the evening describing to me each campaign and every marshal, then the philosophic stage, embroiled and confused, then Richard III, his first Shakespeare play, and the world of tragic poetry thrown open : then the terrible obsession about being independent and supporting his mother, and the days of Dostoyevskian despair as a clerk in a London office ; then taxi-driving in Paris and studying at the Sorbonne while waiting for a fare, and at last Ivan settled and happy, farming in Central France.

The country, under the cloudless September sky, looked incongruously silent and untouched. There had never been such heat all the summer—not even in France. The Germans were announcing from Poland that it was perfect weather for their tanks. I followed the directions, went down through the wood across the little stream and up the perpendicular hillside. This was the farm that Ivan had described in such concrete detail in his letters ; the thousand fruit trees now weighed down with apple, quince, plum and damson (that little " pruneau dont les anglais rafollent "), the pasture land and hayfields on the south-west slopes of the hill where they caught the first sun while the dew was still on them. The wind rustled through the lucerne and I thought to myself—" Ivan should have cut that before he left." The silence began to weigh on me. Then suddenly on the field below me I heard two peasants talking, the younger one was asking the elder to bring his oxen next day to help in the ploughing. I knew the voice—it was Ivan's.

First of all he had to show me everything—the fields he had dug and sown in the spring : the maize for the fowls, the long rows of onions, beans, tomatoes, pimento, potatoes. " Everything grows here," he said proudly. " It's the richest earth in the neighbourhood. The difficulty is the transport, the road is bad, and its six kilometres from the village, that's why the rent is so low. I have made nothing from my fruit this year—it is too abundant and too juicy because of the rains. In other times we should have made brandy of it, but the men who knew how to do that are mobilised now. But I'm very lucky. I sold my horse two months ago. Every horse and mule have been requisitioned now. That is terrible for the peasants ; you can't imagine. I have seen old men weeping as they led their horses to the posts. For them it is like parting with a son. I've still got my two cows and they are not taken yet, though people round here are afraid they'll soon be seized to feed the army. I intend to sell them

Spanish refugees pouring into France, February, 1939.
Spaniards behind barbed wire on the sands of Argelès.



Poles in internment camps, 1940 :

A game of chess in the " Swetlica."
Preparing the camp newspaper
" Caya."

quickly and buy sheep. It'll be easier for my mother to keep sheep when she's alone."

"What do you mean, alone?" I said, for when Ivan was talking I had forgotten everything. "I enlisted the other day," he said. "Foreigners are expected either to go to their own country or join up—there are decrees. No one understands them—but anyway, anything else would be intolerable; not fair to the French. Every man has gone already, everyone between eighteen and forty-eight. They all ask me when I am going. They can't bear to see a young man still free. There are no heroics here. The women weep and say, 'I shall never see my son again,' the old men say 'how shall we get the land ploughed and the seed sown now they have taken away our strong men and our horses?' . . . The war seems unreal when you are busy with your farm. Still, it's an experience—I think I have a kind of curiosity about it, though I have no illusions. Dirt, discomfort, herding together, waste of time—I don't get farther than that in my imagination. Do you remember when I was an enthusiast for Napoleon? Now the one thing I think about is, that it will be lonely for my mother here if she falls ill. But if they leave me time to get the ploughing done and the wood in for the winter, it won't be so bad. I have trees on my land, but felling them and sawing them up will take a fortnight."

We came to the farmhouse, a primitive peasant three-roomed building, rather dilapidated but spacious and dry. Ivan's mother ran out when she heard voices and greeted me joyfully. I found that she was facing the future with courage and calm, and was determined to carry on while her son was away so that he would have his farm to come back to. The matter-of-fact way they both of them took the new upheaval in their lives was quietening: the trouble was it made it difficult to believe that the war was real.

CHAPTER 11

WITH POLES IN HUNGARY

On September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the north (East Prussia), the west and the south (Slovakia). The Polish armies, which had a frontier of more than one thousand miles to defend, were after ten days everywhere in retreat. The Germans surrounded Warsaw and cut off Lwow from the Rumanian frontier. On September 17th, Soviet troops crossed the Polish eastern frontier at various points, and on September 18th Russians and Germans met at Brest Litovsk. Warsaw held out till September 27th, and the fortress of Hela, north of Danzig, till October 2nd. On September 29th Poland was partitioned by a Russa-German agreement. The new frontier gave the east to the U.S.S.R. Germany regained all the Polish territory which had been part of the Reich in 1914, and acquired Warsaw, the lands of the Vistula and Cracow.

I. WORK FOR THE POLISH REFUGEES

For the next seven months, except for Poland, the war was not real.

I read in the newspapers of the onslaught on Poland: aerodromes bombarded, air force out of action in the first days, cavalry hurling itself against an iron wall that moved on and on remorselessly through the gold September weather, its way prepared by dive bombers, flight of the Government and the High Command to Rumania, occupation of Eastern Poland by Soviet troops, heroic defence of Warsaw, abandoned by its leaders and by the world.

I saw pictures of the Polish refugees, streaming in long, forlorn bands into Rumania and Hungary. Chaos has come again, I thought, but this time it does not concern me. Then a voice spoke to me in the black-out of the telephone, a long-distance call from somewhere—was I free? Could I go out on behalf of the Polish Relief Fund and the Friends with Dr. Richard Ellis and Dermod O'Donovan and report on the conditions of the Polish refugees in East and Central Europe. I said I could. The school in which I had been teaching had disappeared into the silence of evacuation. Diminished in numbers, it was in some remote Shropshire castle and did not need me.

I knew something of the Poles already. In 1928 I had been on a tour through Poland as a guest of the Government, along with

a group of experts who were expounding the Dalton system of education. Out of the jumble of impressions, gathered on this tour, certain ones stood out—the thirsty interest of the Poles in education; the difference in their character in the three areas of the old partition. Perhaps it was chance, but those I found most receptive to ideas and enlightened had been under the Austrian occupation. They had been much less oppressed than those who had lived under Tsarist Russia or under Germany, for the Habsburgs had tried to win their favour by giving them a fair measure of autonomy. They had, therefore, a less violent national spirit than the others. They had, too, something of the critical power, the grace and tolerance and international outlook of the Austrians. I realised once again the peculiar magic, the specific culture that the Austrians (in spite of all their crimes) had flung over the vast Empire they once ruled, and which has now gone for ever.

We found thirty-six thousand Polish refugees in Rumania and nearly fifty thousand in Hungary, both soldier and civilian. O'Donovan took Rumania as his sphere of activity, I took Hungary, and Dr. Ellis returned home to report on the needs we had found.

In Rumania the soldiers were soon moved to two large camps specially built for them, the civilians were scattered about in villages and given a fairly generous allowance to live on. In Hungary they were dispersed in one hundred and twenty camps: in disused factories, mills, fortresses, barracks or prisons; a favoured few, mainly civilians, in hotels, children's holiday homes, and castles. Hungary, a country deficient in large buildings, had been overwhelmed by the sudden avalanche.

There were about 35,000 soldiers, 5,000 officers and 10,000 civilians. The military were interned. Hungarian soldiers themselves have to be content with poor quarters and inadequate sanitation, for Hungary is still feudal and hierarchical and has little respect for the common man. Polish officers were well housed, but ordinary soldiers were overcrowded and most had only straw to lie on. They were dirty and lousy for none had a change of clothing. We found hundreds in damp cellars. They were adequately fed for Germany was not yet draining Hungary. But the mental suffering was greater than the physical. There was the humiliation of defeat—and at that time this was put down to unpreparedness, inefficiency and bad leadership, rather than to the overwhelming force of the onslaught. There was the sense of abandonment; the men were cut off among strangers, with no

news from outside, tortured with anxiety about the fate of their relatives, with nothing to do: no means of combatting their despair.

England and France had put pressure on Poland to delay mobilisation and thus avoid provoking Germany. Because it had come at the last moment, many soldiers had wandered about and never found their regiments. They felt the victims of muddle; angry and cheated. Many Polish divisions were without wireless or telephonic communications because these had been destroyed by the Germans. They fought with desperate courage, but as isolated units. Some Poles came over the frontiers in the general confusion, but most believed they would be able to continue the fight in Hungary or in Rumania (which was supposed to be an ally). They were simple, and few had heard of the Hague Convention about the internment of soldiers. Several companies were ordered across the frontiers by their officers who calculated (correctly, as it turned out) that they would be able to fight again in the West or the East.

Some of the civilians were in primitive camps, but many were well-housed, owing to the Hungarian-Polish Society, originally founded for cultural relations between the two countries. Volunteers worked tirelessly on this Committee. They took refugees into their homes and raised money to put them into hotels, boarding-houses and castles. Hundreds of Poles were in fashionable hotels on the Balaton lake.

Unfortunately the people who rush when the first bomb falls are not necessarily the best. The rich with their cars can make the quickest exit, and their life of ease does not make them the most adaptable of refugees. Some Polish aristocrats ran canteens, scrubbed floors and washed dishes, but the bourgeoisie was mostly not prepared to demean itself with domestic toil. They were scandalised to find that they were sharing their asylum with peasant girls or charladies, and overwhelmed with complaints the kind Hungarian women who made arrangements for them.

This, in brief outline, was the state of things we found when we made our tour of inspection at the end of October, 1939.

There was considerable delay in sending the means of relief out to Poles in Hungary. This was unfortunate as the autumn was cold and wet, and was followed by an arctic winter. The soldiers in the camps grew restive. But at the beginning of January ten truckloads of clothes, the first large consignment, arrived from London; the Polish Relief Fund allocated a 'generous sum of

money; welfare workers came out from England—we became a unit of six and could get going.

The clothing which was the gift of the British Government and amounted in value to £30,000, supplied the basic need of the Poles. It was warehoused and distributed free of all dues through the Hungarian Red Cross. The head of the Red Cross was a warm-hearted, energetic woman, but by nature autocratic. Fortunately, George Carter, who represented the British side of the distribution, was not only quick, business-like and hard-working, but also tactful. He established complete co-operation with the Red Cross, and within a fortnight of arrival men scattered about in one hundred and twenty camps were wearing warm sweaters, heavy, army boots, discarded Glasgow transport overcoats and postmen's uniforms. Soon we had started workshops all over the countryside, and Polish women were making shirts for the men and knitting jerseys for themselves and their children. (Later on, George Carter was stolen from us by the Legation, and his place was taken by Charles Rhodes.)

This was, doubtless, the most important side of our work. Clothing helped to save the Poles from pneumonia and typhus and the demoralisation of dirt and rags. Robert Mennell, a Friend, and a great lover of Poland, who did the buying in London, saw this aspect only of the shirts, coats, boots and blankets he sent us. But the Poles found in civilian clothing the means of escape from internment to the armies of France and Syria. The Germans were continually putting pressure on the Hungarian authorities to hand back Poles to them, or at least to make the supervision of their internment camps tighter. Teleki resisted this pressure. The Germans complained that he should still acknowledge Poland after she had ceased to exist, but he firmly continued to give diplomatic rights to the Polish ambassador, consul and military attachés in Budapest. The ambassador was inactive, but the other members of the diplomatic corps worked day and night to get their men out of Hungary. The escapes from the camps and over the "green border" went on all the time and were well organised. The Hungarian military authorities suspected us of having a hand in these escapes and every now and then confiscated the permits to visit the camps which we had received through the Red Cross, but we were innocent. We were a small philanthropic body; the escapes were no concern of ours, nor did the Poles need our help with them.

Robert Mennell was justly proud of making public money go

further by the purchase of the postmen's trousers and Glasgow busmen's overcoats, which had usually been sold cheap to natives in Africa, and was indignant when a wind of criticism blew over to him from the Polish camps. He thought it came from snobbery and did not realise that it was because their semi-uniform character made them more difficult to escape in, nor that the boots there was such a clamour for were needed for midnight trampings destined to carry their wearers very far.

The majority of the Poles now in this country came either through Rumania or Hungary—most of them illegally. In Rumania it was a simpler matter. Germans were not yet on the frontiers of their country and every official could be bought, often, such was their poverty, for quite small sums. The flow of the interned soldiers out of Rumania was comparatively rapid and easy; in Hungary more skill, organisation and secrecy were needed.

The Poles had their own Y.M.C.A. organisation in Hungary, supported by American funds. They started with magnificent plans: they intended to finance a Swetlica, or Club, in each of the one hundred and twenty camps, but they failed to obtain a reasonable exchange for their dollars and could only carry out half their plan. In the meantime, we had been given a third over the official rate for our pounds. We drew a line through Hungary and took the sixty camps of the west, and left the Y.M.C.A. the east. We followed their methods, which are the best-thought-out, and most practicable for internment camps. This is to start a club in each camp, run by representatives of the men, and let all the activities of the camp radiate from this centre. (In large camps there should be several centres.) Our welfare workers, Graham Heath and Halmer Wallis, took the military camps under their wing, and Nancy Catford the civilian. They reported their needs to us in Budapest. When we had supplied them, they went round again suggesting activities and trying to goad the Poles out of the apathy they had fallen into. We sent wireless sets with several loudspeakers (every now and then confiscated by the Hungarian commandants because the Poles listened to the news from London), carpentry and cobblers' outfits, gardening tools, artists' materials, stationery and books. These were a great difficulty because there were few books in Polish in Budapest, but we employed a dozen typists to roneo copies of their favourite works and sent out travelling libraries. (It was too expensive to set up a printing press as had been done for the Serbs in Bizerta.)

Our three field workers got to know many Polish commandants and club organisers in this way, but the three of us in Budapest, George Carter, Muriel Thomas (my secretary) and myself, made most of our friends through the Anglo-Polish Club.

The Hungarians lent us delightful premises for this, within a stone's throw of the Hungaria and the Danube, next door to the fashionable Hangli restaurant. Our idea was to bring the two hundred British residents into contact with the Poles. They had suggested sewing and knitting for them. I did not approve of this (it is better for refugees to do this for themselves, as it takes their mind off their troubles and they use patterns which suit them). I thought they might run a kind of women's institute, but their consul said that Poles were not Anglo-Saxons and this would not succeed. Let there be men, we said, and the club became a combination of social and more serious activities. Classes for English or choir singing, dressmaking or dramatics, went on in one room, tea drinking, gossip and games in another. The club was a warm place on the fierce, frosty nights, and was free to all, though I was distressed to find that our Polish driver did not feel at home in it, for the Poles have a strong sense of class, and the club was not devoid of it.

I met at the club Poles whom I should not otherwise have known. There was the member of the Cracow university who had escaped the fate of his colleagues as he had received the German invitation to attend a lecture on the Nazi attitude to university learning a day too late. Those who had had it in time were sent to the concentration camp of Oranienburg. (While I was in Budapest a Mass was held for the souls of those who had died there.) Pursued by the Gestapo, he made his way through Slovakia and over the snowbound mountains into Hungary. He had an acute and liberal mind. He did not look tough enough for the army, but I shall never forget how gay he was when he left us in the middle of May to fight in France. Accurate as his reading of events so often was, he did not conceive the sinister reality of the French situation and was certainly not prepared for the horror he would soon have to face. I never heard what happened to him. There was the Polish diplomat, humorous, tolerant, shrewd, kind and disillusioned; it was always a relief to discuss problems with him. There was Janina, a psychologist of university standing. She had something rare and hard to describe, which one meets now and again in Polish women—something delicate, subtle and distinguished, both in aspect and mind, a

special grace and charm, and at the same time the vulnerable look that is so disarming.

Janina made possible another of our more personal and intensive efforts—the Girl Students' Home. This was housed in a handsome villa near the park. We took it, equipped and staffed it, and soon Janina was directing the studies of sixty girls. Some of them were like herself, slender, sensitive and appealing, others like good, stout, peasant women. They had been living in very rough camps and the Poles begged us to do something for them. There were brave girls among them. One of them went back disguised as a boy to take her father money in Warsaw and slipped into Hungary again without the knowledge of the authorities. Some came straight from Poland in mid-winter, crossing the high mountains on skis. Girls in Poland were being kidnapped, they said, and taken to labour camps, and worse, by the Germans. The most successful courses were in languages, but they had dressmaking, physical training and dancing too. The dancing scandalised some Poles who visited the Home. They felt that the times were too serious for anything so light-hearted.

There was a large number of boys with the army. Some had gone off with their fathers like squires of the Middle Ages—many had fought with horrifying daring. The Hungarian Save the Children Fund, helped to equip a secondary school, on the Balaton Lake for the better educated of these boys, but nothing was done for the others. I advertised in the Polish newspapers and found some agricultural specialists among the officers, eating their hearts out in internment camps. The authorities released them and they took charge of the three farm colonies we started for Polish boys. The question of buildings had seemed hopeless at first. But there were always fairy godfathers and godmothers in Hungary. One, whom we rather ungratefully called Snake because he told such spiteful stories about everybody, had shaken out of his hat the club rooms and a car to drive us round. Now a fairy godmother, not young, but round and bouncing, with china-blue eyes and yellow hair, tapped at my door. I told her about the boys languishing on damp straw and demoralised by older men. She stamped her foot, and there was a Cardinal, in a red cloak and a hat like Wolsey's. He had, a year before, received thousands of acres of land on the territory north of the Danube which was taken by Hungary from the Czechs at the time of Munich. The Czechs had been builders, they had made schools and model villages. There were two large mansions on the

Cardinal's estate which were empty. He rented them to us for farm colonies.

The boys when they came were delighted to find beds to sleep in, the wireless to listen to, new clothes and abundance of food, but they were incensed when they saw the huge vegetable garden that they were expected to dig. But their directors were experts and had run boys' homes in Poland, and they got them gently but firmly into the rhythm of work.

There is reason to believe that one of the three farm colonies is still carried on by the Hungarians, who showed themselves unexpectedly firm, even after they had joined the Axis, in protecting the Poles who had taken asylum in their country.

We enjoyed our work in Hungary, but when the Polish consul in a speech of thanks to the British for their aid spoke of our constant good humour and the spell of light and warmth we brought into the grimness of their daily life, I realised how untouched we seemed to a people who had been through hell and were waiting in an anxious limbo, not knowing where the next blow would fall. The Poles in the camps did not understand that we represented a voluntary society and that the money we spent on their behalf came largely from the pennies of the poor. They felt that England had guaranteed their independence but had deserted them in their fight, and that now she ought to do something dramatic for them. Take them all to Canada, for instance, regardless of international law. Our wireless sets, tools and other gifts, seemed to them pettifogging, and almost an insult. " Ah yes," the commandants of the camps used to say to our field workers, " you give us shirts and games of chess now, but you ought to have given us bombs before."

Undiscouraged by these reproaches, our trio made their round of the camps. In February and March this was difficult because of the mountains of snow. Sometimes trains ceased to run for several days. Looking out of the window of our boarding house, Muriel Thomas and I were pleased to see the stiff frozen Danube —it would be long before the stream of swastika-covered barges, which we had watched throughout the autumn laden with the oil of Rumania and the turkeys and white flour of Hungary, would be able to resume their journey to Vienna and Germany. The Poles were happy, too, because the frozen Drava simplified night escapes into Yugoslavia, and ice and snow were a protection from the Germans, who held the borders of Hungary, on the north and west. In April the snows melted, but the land was drowned in

flood. Passing through the countryside in a train one day I saw vast fields moving in a brown tide, heralded by a shallow curling wave. It looked sinister and caused great destruction. The Germans said that God was punishing Hungary for the friendship Count Teleki was showing to the Jewish Plutocratic West, and their allies the Poles. The Hungarians said that it was because of the Treaty of Trianon. They used to be able to control the Tisza, a river much subject to flood, but now its upper course had been wrested from them and handed to the Slovaks, who were cutting down the forests on its banks with ruthless disregard of increased flooding danger. Before 1919 there had been a good telephone system of flood warnings, but because of Slovak hostility this no longer worked. Trianon had been indifferent to geography. Unfortunately Hungary had been indifferent to her nationalities and made them want to break away, but it was difficult for a Magyar to see this point of view.

To tell the truth we were like the Slovaks, pleased at the floods—they made us feel safer. When they had gone down and the land had dried, there was nothing but open plains between us and the German hordes. The sinking of the waters coincided with the news of the allied disasters in Norway. The stock of England and France slumped overnight. The Hungarians, backed by the still neutral Italy, retained enough independence to refuse the German demand to police the Danube, but they submitted to complete censorship of their press. From now on, even the *Pester Lloyd* printed only news favourable to our enemies. It was not difficult. For months there was not much else to record.

II. HUNGARY IN 1940

As our disasters increased, the Hungarian military authorities became outspokenly pro-Nazi. It was clear that if the Germans chose to march in, there would be no resistance, especially as they had several trumps to play. Hungary had lost two-thirds of her territory and more than half the population over which she had ruled, at the Treaty of Trianon. All over Budapest, even over the bell of the Pension in which we lived, were written the words in which Hungary recorded her protest to this dismemberment, "Nem, Nem, Soha" (No, no, never). Germany had only to promise that she would receive back Transylvania from the Rumanians and the Voivoidina from Yugoslavia to be sure of a welcome.

The aristocracy was, in sentiment, inclined to be pro-British

and pro-French, though they were anything but democratic. They were, to a man almost, legitimist—the Habsburgs had entrenched them in privilege and they wanted the good times back again. Some of them knew it was hopeless. They still owned a vast proportion of the best land of Hungary, but they were no longer so powerful. Many had had estates in the territory which had fallen to the Czechs and Rumanians and lost a good part of them to the peasants, for both Czechs and Rumanians had made energetic agrarian reforms. They were hit by the fall of agricultural prices in the nineteen thirties. There were no indulgent Habsburgs now to forgive them their debts, and the Jews were chary of lending them money. They were not what they had been. An Esterhazy could no longer organise pilgrimages to Maria Zell for eleven thousand of his subjects with a train of horses, camels and carriages, nor endow two hundred courtisans and countless illegitimate children. The heir to that famous house was pleased to make lists of clothes in the refugee warehouse. I often saw him examining layettes with a puzzled air—we had thousands of baby clothes sent us and scarcely a baby to give them to. The young counts were like their sisters, bored with doing nothing. Some of the girls who worked with the greatest devotion for the Polish refugees told me that before the war they had had nothing but a round of pleasure—cocktail parties, bridge all night, the winter at Monte Carlo, the summer on their estates. It had grown monotonous—a job was greater fun.

But though the aristocracy was a tiny minority and its influence on the decline, it had still an air of great brilliance and dazzled foreigners. The English especially, invited to exquisite meals in the feudal homes that overlook the Danube, or for a weekend's wild goose shooting at a country castle, used to come back denouncing Trianon and sighing for a restoration of the Habsburgs. In the winter of 1939 to 1940 there was no spot in Europe equal to Budapest in fashion and elegance. Nowhere else could have been seen so many well-dressed people as at a cocktail party in Buda or at the Regent's ball. In the middle of the black-out of Europe this city glittered like a Christmas tree. Yet some of the worst conditions I have seen in my life I saw in the Jewish ghettos and prisons of Budapest. There has been little progress since Macartney wrote in 1934: "The municipality can afford statues to foreign journalists but leaves whole colonies of human beings to huddle in cellars, kilns and holes in the ground. Indifference to the material needs of the poor is still very widespread and

equally general . . . the habit of regarding the workers as an inferior brand of humanity, of extracting from them the forms of servile obedience and regarding any other attitude as not merely improper but dangerous."

If this is true of the factory workers what can be said about Hungary's three million beggars—the landless men and their dependents who have only seasonal occupation on the great estates? Their poverty is only surpassed in Estremadura and Andalucia. Indeed with Franco Spain, Hungary is the most reactionary country in Europe. There is no unemployment insurance either for workers or peasants, and the unemployed depend on charity to save them from starvation.

Undoubtedly there is bitter discontent, but Left movements have been so sternly repressed ever since Bela Kun that it finds little expression. It is small wonder that the Crossed Arrow, the local brand of Fascism, made great headway. It promised to divide up the estates, and its anti-semitism appealed to the middle classes who saw most of the wealth in the hands of the Jews. This was their own fault for the Hungarians did not produce a middle class when it was needed in the nineteenth century. The magnates and country gentry were too grand to go into business—the Jews filled the gap they left more completely in Hungary than in any part of the Habsburg world; the capital indeed was often called Judapest. After Trianon thousands of impoverished gentry sought a living and crowded not into business but into the civil service. Hungary's bureaucracy was the most overstocked and underpaid in the world, and as in Vienna became a good seed bed for Nazi doctrines.

There were frequent trials of people accused of Communism. An old man, well-dressed and polished in manner, came to see me one day and suddenly burst into tears. His son had "said something foolish in a village" and was pursued by the police: he wanted me to help him out of the country. There must have been hundreds in similar case.

"You English are so naive," a jolly, very philanthropic Hungarian woman said to me once. "You are so kind and good yourselves that you cannot believe in wickedness. You flirt with the Soviet. You do not know the danger of Communism. But in Hungary we know all about it. We lived through Bela Kun. Why, my dear, you won't believe it, but we had six dirty little children from the slums lying in our drawing-room. And we were all given jobs and ordered about by common people. My

sister and I had to take slum children expeditions to the museums and the parks. And my cousin had to give them hot baths in her own private bathroom. You don't know what a Red Terror is, but we do." Bela Kun sounded familiar—like the evacuation stories that had greeted me when I got back to England in the middle of September and which had seemed such light relief after the anguish of France.

I told my Hungarian friend that I had passed through Budapest in 1920 and had watched an altruistic Jew interviewing would-be suicides. There was a girl who had been fished out of the Danube the night before—her husband had been killed by the White Terrorists. There was a young man with a fine face but wild eyes—what of them? The official figures of the Bela Kun victims had never been more than five hundred odd, but thousands had perished at the hands of the White Terrorists, and thousands more been put in concentration camps; it had been the first try-out of Fascism in Europe. But she said, "tut, tut, my dear, tut, tut. Our young men were a little wild perhaps, but all that was put down eventually by the good Count Bethlen."

III. UNDERWORLD IN HUNGARY

Polish relief kept me fully occupied, but early in 1940 I became aware that there were refugees in Hungary who were much more unfortunate than the Poles. A pretty Jewish girl from Vienna told me that she had fled to Poland after the Anschluss and at the outbreak of war had come into Hungary along with many other Austrians and Czechs. Those of them who were Jews had at first been helped by Jewish committees, but they had recently been outlawed. Many had been interned already—their terror was that they were to be handed back to the Germans. Her fiancé was a Czech and they were both in hiding, changing their lodging frequently.

After this one or two Czechs came to see me, young men with haunted faces. They asked me to give them money to escape into Yugoslavia and join the Czech legion in France. They looked so desperate that I had not the heart to refuse.

Soon after this the British Legation told me that there were one hundred and twenty Czech prisoners in the Citadel who had managed to smuggle out a letter to the Minister describing the horrible conditions in which they were living—lying in damp cells on filthy straw, with no proper sanitation and only two litres of water for all purposes: drinking, washing and rinsing their dishes.

They had never had a change of shirt since they had fled from their country, nor a bath, and were afraid of an outbreak of typhus. The Legation wanted me to appeal to England for money so that they might at least have a change of linen. I did so and received £100.

The Citadel is one of the very few mediæval buildings still left in Hungary. It crowns the precipitous Gellert hill in Buda and scowls down at the Danube. It is always pointed out to tourists as a show piece. It looked less picturesque to me now. I made discreet inquiries and found that the Czechs at the Citadel were a group of students, workers, doctors, teachers and ex-officers who had been pursued by the Gestapo in Prag for their anti-Nazi activities and arrested when travelling through Hungary in the autumn of 1939. A large group of them had been given away by an agent provocateur who had promised to guide them at night over the borders into Yugoslavia. He was in the pay of the Germans and had handed them over to the Hungarian police.

I was puzzled that the Hungarians, who were, most of them, remarkably tolerant of and kind to Poles should be so harsh to the Czechs, but little by little I learned the reason. The Czechs were traitors, they said coldly: they had given the stab in the back in the last war that had brought down the old Habsburg monarchy, and as their reward had received Slovakia, which before had belonged to Hungary. The Magnates were angry because the Czechs had divided up their estates amongst the peasants and given them small compensation. Besides they weren't gentlemen—they were the Mittelschullehrer of Europe pedagogues, clerks, lower middle class. Macartney explained it to me; he said that the intense hatred the Hungarians felt for the Czechs, more than for the Rumanians whom they merely despised, and much more than for the Croats, was because they had the qualities in which they themselves were deficient—efficiency, industry and adaptability. "Besides, you know," a Hungarian student told me, "Czechs are all pro-Russian in their hearts. You won't believe me but their country was swarming with Soviet airmen at the time of Munich."

When the Germans pressed the Hungarians to refuse the Czechs right of entry to their country and to arrest them when they found them there, they were only too eager to comply. They had two or three methods of doing this. Some were put into military prisons on a trumped-up charge of espionage and awaited trial. A hundred and twenty, as we have seen, were kept in the Citadel for months without trial, but the rank and file were put into ordinary

prisons and from time to time taken in batches to the frontier and handed back to the Germans. I had been already to one of these prisons. A Hungarian Jewess of great influence in Budapest had taken me there to see the plight of the stateless Jews. She was *persona grata* to the prison directors and guards. They took us into a long room with walls and floors of concrete and without a stick of furniture. There were two hundred men in this room. They were standing up when we came in and had a look of drooping dejection, impossible to describe. They were filthy, ragged and underfed. Some of them had been there for months. They had no change of linen, no soap or water to wash in. There was no positive cruelty shown to them—they were just forgotten. Most of them had escaped from Germany or Austria. To my great relief I found a few Poles amongst them. The Polish consul in Budapest was very active : I knew he would get them out without delay, but for the other poor devils there was nothing to offer, no protecting power ; only a few helpless people who cared about their fate but could do nothing for them.

Since the fall of Poland, Hungary had become the only route of escape for the Czechs, and there was an elaborate underground organisation that helped them. Because of my innocent inquiries as to how to send shirts to the Czechs at the Citadel, I became more and more involved in this organisation. At the time of writing I cannot say much about it for though most of the people I came across have long since disappeared from Hungary, they may be at work elsewhere.

The leaders were—most of them—single-minded, courageous men and women. Although they all had foreign passports, real or false, they were in great danger. They were watched by the Hungarian police and followed about by German "tourists." They usually met in cafés or teashops. I did not want to bring discredit on the Unit and get the whole lot of us expelled from the country, so I begged them only to use me when absolutely necessary. This happened fairly frequently. Sometimes their money had not come through—my £100 became a sort of widow's cruse for they always paid me back in dollars or gold when I lent it to them. Sometimes one of their key people had to flee, without warning, and there was an interim gap to fill. There was the case of X, the first organiser whom I knew. He came to me for help in minor matters but our talks were discreet. He introduced me to others in their café haunts, but I had no idea how they arranged the escapes and was indeed anxious to remain ignorant.

Then one day a mysterious person appeared out of the fog and said to me, " you don't know me and you mustn't ask my name. I come to bring you news. When X came to his boarding-house two nights ago the chambermaid told him that the police were waiting for him in his rooms. He went straight to the station and is now out of the country. X told me that you would help. There are forty Czechs in prison now, who in three days' time are going to be taken to the frontier and handed over to the Germans. They have no money and no food. X used to take that to them and arrange things for them. I can't do anything because I'm a Hungarian and for me it would be treason, but it is quite simple for you." My visitor gave me some hurried directions as to the methods employed. They seemed strange to me, but before I had recovered from my surprise my visitor had disappeared.

There was nothing for it but to do as I was told. No one can refuse to help the drowning.

I learned to admire the Czechs deeply. These men in danger of their lives were most of them quiet, self-composed, unostentatiously brave. As it turned out, I was in a much better position to help them than most people in Budapest because I had the cloak of the Poles. When Czechs came to my boarding-house they were introduced as Poles by the chambermaid who could see no difference in the two races. If I went to a prison, it was assumed that I was a Sister of Mercy befriending some poor Poles who had got into difficulties.

In the end at least half of the Czechs from the Citadel escaped and some hundreds from other prisons. I have several times met Czechs over here whom I last saw as hunted hares in Hungary.

An encouraging thing was the way Slavs of different nationalities co-operated in these escapes. Croats came up from Zagreb and Serbs from Belgrade to help in the work. This was so dangerous that they usually had to retire after a short spell of activity, but from my brief contacts with them I gained an insight into a new Yugoslavia. Many of them were young. They told me that they did not believe in the old enmities of their fathers, that they had friends not only in every part of Yugoslavia but even in Bulgaria. The conception of Pan Serbia or Pan anything else was anathema to them. They had ideals beyond a narrow nationalism.

Some of the Czechs went to join Weygand's army in Syria and their route was through Belgrade. I gave them introductions to my old friends of the last war and they wrote to me afterwards describing the royal welcome they had received. In general they

were helped throughout Yugoslavia. This was encouraging, not merely because it showed how anti-Nazi the country was but because, in forwarding the escapes of Czechs and Poles, Serbs and Croats were working together.

When I had a moment to spare from the practical problems of every day in Budapest, I often wondered if the new outlook I found among the Yugoslavs helping with the Czech escapes augured a brighter future for their country, where there would be co-operation instead of strife, cultural autonomy instead of opression.

IV. TENSION

In May tension increased. Poles with their sixth sense for disaster were sure that the Germans were going to march into Hungary. I used to look out from my balcony every morning expecting to see their armies goose-stepping along the Corso. Whenever I went up to our Legation in Buda I was struck, not so much by the lovely view of the Danube and the city lying below us, as by the cloud of burnt paper floating through its drawing-rooms and spacious verandahs. The diplomatic corps was destroying its secret documents and preparing for departure. The Minister, Mr. O'Malley, began to shun the cocktail parties of Hungarian society, though his wife (Ann Bridge) appeared at them, and one could still meet the French there and discuss " la cause commune."

It was taken for granted amongst us that we might all have to flee at an hour or so's notice. We went about with dollars tied round our waists and had our passports vizaed ready for both Rumania and Yugoslavia. I set up a committee of Hungarians and empowered them to take over our Mission's money and property and use them on behalf of the Poles in case of our departure. The Polish authorities made some secret arrangements with their nationals, but unfortunately a great many of them were in the country north of the Danube and the Danube was a great obstacle to flight. We provided bundles of ten-pengo notes and iron rations to the heads of the farm colonies and other groups of Poles in whom we had taken a special interest. They were to be distributed in case of sudden attack, but the situation was terribly racking for them. The only place the Poles felt happy was on the southern border; they were not allowed anywhere near the east, which was considered a military zone. The Hungarians were convinced that they would soon be in possession of Transyl-

vania again, but had not the same designs on the Voivoidina—at least not at that time. No propaganda was made against the Croats with whom Teleki had made a treaty of friendship. I was sorry our two farm colonies were north of the Danube, and when Nancy found a large house near Barcs only a mile or two from the Yugoslav frontier, I had taken it gladly. It was our third farm colony. That was why Nancy and I found ourselves at Barcs on May 14th, 1940. We had spent the week-end seeing the first, batch of Poles into the house. We were now in a hurry to get back. Nancy had driven me down in our Ford, and we were just climbing back into it when the benevolent local Hungarian doctor who had befriended our schemes, ran out and stopped us.

" There was a call for you from Budapest—you must ring them up at once. One of your English colleagues by his voice."

At last we got on. " Have you heard the news ? " It was, as the doctor had thought, one of our colleagues. " No, no news—we've been in the country all the time. Never seen a newspaper. What news ? " " Well, it's difficult to say over the telephone—but it's very bad. You can guess I expect. Anyway there's no time to lose. There may be twenty-four hours—not more. We've had it from our Consul. We suggested trying to get through to France but the Consul thought it was too late for that. You see where the danger lies." " All right, we'll come up straight away to Budapest—we were just going to start." " No, don't do that—that's why we rang up. And don't go south—that's unhealthy. You must make at once for Rumania. We're starting to-night."

" That Francesca ? "—it was another colleague speaking. " You've been told ? Yes, the Consul was very grave. He gives us twenty-four hours—not more. You can just make it." " We might meet in Arad—that's just over the border." " Good—Arad then. And buy up food." " Who for ? For refugees you mean ? But how ? " " Well—I thought it might be a good idea. Must break off now—lot to do. Meet you again in Arad."

" Well—so that's that, Nancy. Do you think the Ford'll get us to the borders to-night ? " " I dare say. We can try. Szeged's the nearest. Looks about as far as Budapest on the map. We'd better go and warn the Polish Commandant." " Do you know where to find him ? " Yes—Nancy knew all about Barcs : it was one of her beats. We found him deep in an after-dinner sleep—it was beginning to be siesta weather. He was

faintly startled when we told him our news but too soldierlike to show emotion. " I'll keep a watch all night," he said. " We're only half an hour from the Yugoslav frontier here. We've got friends on the borders—they'll let us know. I've always reckoned that we'd have two hours for a get-away down here. We're luckier than those poor devils in the north. I shan't tell anyone—you can trust me. I'm an old soldier. We mustn't have a panic. We've been expecting this for a long time—but it always seems sudden when it comes." The little man, so matter-of-fact and calm, inspired confidence. He had already won my esteem because he had helped the Czechs—had passed them off as Poles and got them across the river at night with his own people. I had pleaded for them on an earlier occasion, and I knew that he had kept his promise about them. Nancy and I felt that he was one of the bravest Poles we knew.

It was three o'clock by this time. The Ford had an unpleasant way of refusing to start, but the Commandant ran behind it, with a parting shove, and it behaved better than usual—still we realised we were starting our race with the German army a little late. Or was it the Italian? Probably both together by way of Yugoslavia. What about the poor Commandant then and the five hundred Poles in his care? Once in Yugoslavia they would be soldiers again. They would turn round and fight. They would love that. Running away seemed horribly mean—but presumably everyone would be running too, very soon. They must have meant that by suggesting buying up food in Arad. I remembered the Unit's regret in Barcelona that they hadn't started their flight a little earlier. They got mixed up in the general mêlée and found it difficult to open canteens.

Nancy was singing by this time. She had a nice little voice and remembered thousands of folk songs. She always sang in the car when driving long distances, to keep herself awake. Hungary is very flat—if you complained of that, for it is a little monotonous, they always told you it's because you took away Transylvania and Slovakia at Trianon. But we were glad of it now for even our dugout Ford could manage forty miles an hour and carry on fairly steadily. The roads were sandy and full of sharp stones, and when the car made a sudden twist, I knew we'd had a puncture again. This time Nancy didn't have to spend six hours getting the tire off the wheel with inadequate instruments and mending the hole without the proper gadgets, as had happened one night when we were returning from the south with the official from the

Hungarian Home Office—this time she had a spare wheel, and we only wasted half an hour. Still, it cast a little gloom on us. We had had no lunch and were hungry. Then I suddenly remembered with horror my six hundred dollars, a nasty thing to cross the frontier with unless one had permission. We stopped at Pecs and bought some rolls and cheese and something to conceal my dollars in : something that did not look too obvious.

Pecs with its steep streets and its cathedral overlooking the town has more individuality than most Hungarian towns. I remembered when I had visited it with Caya in the early winter frosts, thinking that if I were a student I should like to study at its university. The car hummed on and took us through Mohacs, a lost little town that appeared to have no memory in it to account for the sinister sound it has in European ears—except for the extra gaudiness of its peasant costumes, it is a dull place. It had been famous in the councils of our Unit because we had once thought of helping the Buergermeister to build a model village—or rather a street of sixteen houses—which would be inhabited by Polish families while the war lasted and be used for Hungarian peasants when it was over. We had been much attracted by the idea of achieving something lasting in the impermanent world of war relief. But alas for such schemes now. Soon this town—so near the southern border—would be boiling over with military.

Nancy and I had been this road a month before when we had taken the Barcs house. Things had been on the upgrade then—now the world was collapsing, although to the outward eye things seemed so normal and ordinary, with hay already stacked in the fields, the wheat bright emerald, maize stalks sprouting, goose girls guiding their cackling flocks across village greens, peasant boys driving in to milk white cows with long wavy horns. Was it all much the same on the eve of Mohacs ? Probably—the Magyar world has changed little with time. The peasants perhaps knew nothing of the Moslem hordes advancing over the Danube plains on the eve of the battle that was to drown Hungary in Turkish night for the next two hundred years. And now they knew as little of the impending Nazi terror. Perhaps they were equally indifferent to both. Mohacs, I thought, Kossovo. Strange that the Serbs remember Kossovo and the Hungarians forget Mohacs.

By this time it was uncomfortably near sunset and we had not even reached the Danube. After that there must be at least a hundred miles to Szeged. Perhaps with this scare on, the sentinels would not allow us to cross it. They did, in fact, look with a

certain suspicion at the two hatless women, but Nancy, curly-headed, blue-eyed, snub-nosed, brown as a berry, looked disarmingly innocent, though in these parts a somewhat unusual chauffeur. They examined our papers and let us past. " They don't know yet that the Germans are coming in to-night—to-night or perhaps to-morrow," I thought.

We had crossed the river but there was no doubt of it now—night was falling and there were still about a hundred miles to the frontier. " We'll have to stay the night at Baja, Nancy." We knew the hotel—a festive place I had thought it last time with its terrace overlooking the Danube that sweeps round here in a magnificent curve. " We'll have a bite anyway," was Nancy's non-committal reply. We ordered coffee with foamy whipped cream and were sipping it, glancing idly at *Pester Lloyd.* " My goodness—look at the date. It's the 14th. The 15th starts at midnight." " Well, who cares ? " grunted Nancy. " But don't you remember my secret emissary hot from Prague saying that the fifteenth was the day fixed for the drive south-east ? " Nancy suggested, seeing that the date was so ominous, that we might see if there were a train. We went to the station but it was as dead as mutton. We were tired. We returned to the hotel and went to bed—invasion or no invasion. We were past caring.

I slept badly. There were noises throughout the night. About three o'clock bells rang. The Crossed Arrow ringing bells of joy because their friends had come in. The tocsin. It did not seem to matter. At five we started off again.

We arrived at Szeged at eight—the train to the border had gone. There was another at two. We put the Ford in a garage and I wrote a note to the head of the Red Cross saying where it was. We wandered round disconsolately in a drizzle. We had the usual lunch—gulyash and potatoes and a compôte. In Hungary food in private houses is delicious, with soufflés and game and sweets made with whipped cream, but in restaurants it is heavy We got into our train at last, and within an hour arrived at the Rumanian border.

The next scene was surprising. We were in a waiting-room surrounded by Hungarian soldiers with drawn bayonets, being sternly questioned in German by the local C.I.D. It was my fault. No one would have suspected Nancy of being an international spy trying to escape over the border into Rumania at a tense moment of the war. It was my silly habit of clinging to papers that had been our undoing. My grandmother had never

destroyed a single postcard, and my father had always hoarded old letters and newspaper cuttings, and I had inherited from them an aversion to tearing things up. My handbag was full of oddments which anyone of sense would have destroyed before a frontier customs' examination. Amongst them was a curious document handed me by a Czech. It was a crude translation into French of a leaflet which the Germans had recently been distributing amongst the Slovaks. It ran as follows :—

> "Slovaks arise! To arms! The hour of the Hungarian counts has struck. Claim your just rights. Deliver your oppressed brethren and the land between the Danube and the Tisza will be yours. Budapest is in a panic. Count Teleki is trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. He is suborned by the Jewish plutocrats of England and by their friends the Poles. God is punishing Hungary, your oppressor. He sent her a hard winter, and then devastated her by flood. Slovaks —to arms! Trust in the German Fuehrer—he is your friend."

This document would have passed unnoticed as it was in French, a language unknown to Hungarian border officials. But with the idiocy of the unhardened criminal I had made a last moment attempt to dispose of it and had only succeeded in tearing it in half. It was now in the hands of the C.I.D. man awaiting an interpreter. At last he arrived—an unpleasant old man; from his bullying manner and pedantic air a former schoolmaster. He spoke English and understood French.

"This is treason against the Hungarian state," he said sternly. "It is obvious that you are both of you Germans and that you are trying to rouse our Slovak subjects against us." "Then why should we be going over to Rumania?" I asked feebly. "There are plenty of Slovaks over the borders, you know as well as I do." "Look at our passports—look at our faces, listen to Nancy's accent," I said desperately. "All that is nothing. Spies can easily manage that. You may be Jews," he replied. "Oh come now—with my snub nose," Nancy rallied him.

At this point the C.I.D. man exclaimed in triumph. He had got hold of my cheque book and was examining its counterfoils. "But this is most important," he said. "They are at the head of a vast organisation and have been spending thousands of pengos. Listen to this. 550 pengos to Goldschmidt, 750 to Guttman, 900 to Rosenkranz." I explained for the twentieth time that day that I was at the head of a British relief organisation

for Polish refugees. It wasn't my responsibility if all Hungarian tradesmen had German Jewish names: I had bought carpentry outfits from one, seeds from another and pots and pans from a third. He shook his head. "You must go before the military tribunal of Debrecen," he said. "There is no one competent to deal with you here." "I have always wanted to see Debrecen," Nancy said dreamily. "It will be pleasant to go there at the Hungarian expense."

"When women dabble in politics it is always bad," the old pedagogue remarked sententiously. "How did you come by this seditious document? Who gave it to you?" "An American," I lied with sudden presence of mind, remembering that the American I was thinking of had left Hungary some days before. "Ah," he said, "this is important. What kind of an American?" "A very good kind," I said, "a member of the Y.M.C.A., what you, I think, call the IMKA." "IMKA," he wrote down, "what's that?" "It's an international organisation for helping young men. You know, it gives them books and paper and pencils and cups of tea." "Ah," he repeated, "International. Books and papers. Where is its centre?" Here was another clue. The Bolshevik bogey is never far from any Hungarian mind. If I had said Moscow, our friends in Budapest would have had hard work to save Nancy and me from the firing squad. "I don't know," I said, "I've never thought of it. It might be London, but don't write that down because it may be New York, and I don't want to offend the Americans." "And why did the American give you this seditious document and why did you preserve it?" "The American thought it had a topical interest, I think. Your Prime Minister Teleki was talking about trouble with the Slovaks the other day in Parliament. And I kept it, if you wish to know, because I wanted to show it to the Esterhazys, Andrassys, Szaparis, Karolyis and all the others I work with in Budapest. I thought if their hour has struck, they ought to be informed." "Counts and countesses are nothing to us," he said haughtily. "Don't imagine you can impress us with your aristocratic friends. It may be that their hour is striking, but we don't need foreigners to tell us about it." "But what about the Germans rousing the Slovaks against you?" I asked, and I remembered suddenly that Nancy and I were fleeing from them. They seemed remote now—the Hungarian guards with their drawn bayonets looked much more menacing.

The C.I.D. man took charge again now. He ordered the

guard to march us off to prison. The next day we would be taken to the military tribunal at Debrecen. "Don't forget to ring up the Budapest authorities," I said, "they will tell you all about us." "I will do what is necessary," he said sternly. "I don't need advice from you."

We were taken to the fire station, allowed to order food from a restaurant and given beds to lie on. Two guards were set to watch us. They didn't speak anything but Hungarian, but managed to convey quite a lot to us during our night session. They were good-tempered fellows but, like all the Hungarian army at this time, they were imbued with admiration for the Nazis. Our fate was grim in any case, they told us. If we got back to London we'd find Hitler there before us. Why were we in such a hurry? It would be nicer for us really in a Hungarian prison. "You'll be marching the goose step before we'll be heiling Hitler," Nancy told them, and she drew a picture of them doing it.

Nancy was merry all the time, and at night she slept like a top. But I felt uncomfortable and wakeful. It was true this hole-and-corner border was singularly inefficient. They hadn't even discovered my dollars. But Debrecen might be more thorough and if they came across them, they would be sure that we were spies—money meant certain guilt in Hungary—or they might think that we were English indeed but preparing sabotage; an Englishman had just been run in for trying to blow up the Iron Gates. I had still one paper they had not discovered, something to do with escaping Czechs. It was obscure, but my conscience was unusually alert. *Pester Lloyd* had been full of new decrees—threats of enormous fines and long-term imprisonment to anyone who helped any Czech in hiding in Hungary. I had never been a thriller fan, but I knew that people swallowed papers when they were in a tight place. I didn't fancy that. There was a simpler method of disposal. There is one thing that even prisoners suspected of inciting treason against the state are never denied—I knew that. I roused one of our guards and he conducted me downstairs. I was annoyed to find that there was no flush; I had to spend a good deal of time poking about with a brush before I was easy in my mind again. I need not have troubled. When morning dawned a message was brought us that the Chief of Police in Budapest had given us a clean sheet and we could proceed on our journey.

Nancy and I had lost all our desire for Rumania by this time.

There was no sign of the Germans anywhere, but I'd always promised that I would go and see the work in Bucharest, and we thought that if we changed our plans it might rouse suspicion against us again : so we proceeded on our journey.

V. RUMANIA

There was no question now of stopping in Arad. We had missed any possible rendezvous there through our arrest. When we got to Bucharest we found messages from the rest of the Unit. They had been to the Consul again and he had told them that though the situation was menacing, especially from Italy, there was no immediate need for flight—so they had stayed. This was a great relief. It is very silly to be arrested and interned for three or four years, as some of my friends were destined to be only a month later, because they couldn't believe " alarmist " rumours about the imminent fall of Paris, but at the time it seems even sillier to run away unnecessarily.

The Bucharest we arrived in on May 16th was very different in atmosphere from the Bucharest I had seen in October of the year before when I had gone with Dr. Ellis and Dermod O'Donovan to investigate the situation of the Polish refugees. It wasn't just the season. Both are exquisite in Rumania. Autumn showers the birch trees with delicate gold leaves and makes the woods flame red—spring makes Bucharest into a garden city. Everywhere there are cafés and restaurants where you can take refreshment out of doors—under trees beside a lake or somewhere equally idyllic. There was still an aerial lightness in the place, but this time it seemed too insubstantial for the modern world, too brittle altogether : at a touch the whole house of cards might collapse. Even in October I had written in my diary—" a strange Opéra Comique city—grand and gay but shoddy. It can't last in this rocky world. A little shock and it will all come tumbling down. At the moment it is being pulled down and built up again at the order of Carol. The Palace shows its entrails—cheap brick. It is being faced rapidly with white plaster. The soldiers, many of whom were mobilised at the beginning of the war, work at it night and day. A Rumanian said to me that it was an ominous sign, all this rebuilding, because the same thing had happened in 1914. The British Council people who are teaching English to five thousand Rumanians are stuffed into a pokey building because their own quite handsome villa obstructs Carol's view and he is sweeping it away."

If Bucharest had seemed insubstantial then it appeared frailer than gossamer in the middle of May. It has great charm. Its sky-scrapers make it seem very modern after Budapest, and its cooking, as light and delicate as the French, is also a great contrast to the Hungarian. But it was in a pitiful state of panic. Every day there were new police regulations—orders and counter orders. Foreigners of all sorts excited terror: the Germans because everyone had heard of the " tourists " in Norway and the Netherlands, the English and French because they looked as if they would soon be off the map. In October everyone had boasted loudly of our alliance: assured us that the valiant Rumanian army would not give in like the Polish; that Carol had given orders to flood trenches with petrol and set it alight so that the Germans would be faced with walls of fire. Now they expected parachutists to descend any minute around Ploesti and cut Bucharest off from her oil wells. Carol went in terror of being bumped off by the Nazified Iron Guard whom he had handled roughly in a moment of pro-English exuberance, or by the peasants who hated him for his extravagant palace.

Already the journalists and diplomats at the Athenée Palace were discussing the collapse of France and with it the crumbling of Weygand's army in Syria which Rumania had counted on to save her in case of sudden attack.

The English talked of a ship in Constanza, waiting ready to take them off at any moment and were pleased because as the Germans could only come via Hungary, except for a few parachutists, they would get forty-eight hours' notice for their flight, and petrol was not rationed as it was over the borders.

I was at the British Legation the day that the break-through at Sedan was announced in the papers.

It was a pleasure to talk again to the Minister's wife, though she wasn't quite as detached as usual and I felt that the tension had clipped her wings. She had taught herself to fly, and when I had been at Bucharest in the autumn had always gone off for an early morning spin. " You can't get lost," she had said dreamily. " You follow the railway lines and you go on and on and if you don't get back to Bucharest you know you must be going the wrong way so you turn round." Her gentle, rather wistful look won her more friends amongst foreigners than the competent society manners more usual in diplomatic circles, and the unexpected endings of her remarks kept the attention on the alert. There was an art in the artlessness of her talk. " I hate bombing—

especially of open cities," she had said on another occasion, " but I do think a bomb ought to be dropped on our Treasury. You were admiring our open fire. Well, the Legation is a very cold place in the winter, but it took ages for us to get permission to have it. And then we were told that it must be a very little one and very economical and they were so afraid we would spend too much that they sent an architect up from Constantinople and the bricks from England. And the architect made a very cheap design which I told him would be unsafe. And of course it was, and the next spring the whole top storey caught fire. I had to stay in Bucharest and clear up the mess, and I couldn't fly to Persia and say good-bye to my horse."

This time she said, " I hate bombing and destruction as much as ever, but I do think the French ought to have blown up their bridges. Soon the poor Poles will be caught here like rats in a trap."

I was sorry that I could not get a permit to visit the Polish camps and see the work that O'Donovan had set on foot there, but I heard much praise of it. He had worked in collaboration with the Polish Y.M.C.A., which was in charge of a very able American, Mr. Brown. British aid had been concentrated at first on the soldiers. They had had to be clothed. Many were also in need of quinine, as they had at first been put into camps in malarial regions of the Dobrudja—refugees have no rights: there is no Geneva Convention for them as there is for prisoners of war.

In January the Polish soldiers had been concentrated in two large camps. O'Donovan, acting with the Rumanian Y.M.C.A., had received permission to work in them. T., a Pole with a real gift for handling the common man, had got a large number of men interested in the activities set up. Illiterates were learning to read and write, the educated were studying languages, men were gardening and keeping pigs (they even had a sausage industry), taking lessons in carpentry, shoe-making, welding, motor mechanics and lorry driving—for there was no lack of petrol in Rumania.

Sidney and Joyce Loch were also in Rumania, working for the Poles. They gave to Bucharest a feeling of stability which I found most reassuring. I had met them in Greece in 1929 helping refugees from Anatolia to settle into their new homes and distributing little fish that eat mosquito larvæ to villages infected with malaria. After that they had lived in the Chalcidike peninsular and survived a tremendous earthquake. They told me how the

frightened people had considered them as mascots and always tried to crouch near them while the earth was heaving. I understood that. Sidney Loch is the type of Englishman still to be found occasionally—kind, correct, courteous, in every circumstance imperturbable, but in his heart unconventional and even a little romantic. After fighting through the last war he went with his wife to do relief work with the Friends in the villages of East Poland, and after that never managed to settle in England again. His wife Joyce is an Australian. I don't know whether she lived in the bush there, but she certainly has the practical knowledge and the gift of improvisation of one who had. They had thrown a kind of magic spell over the civilian Poles in Rumania. They had got garden clubs going in all the villages with lectures on horticulture by experts, and women and girls to work at hat-making, hair-dressing, First Aid and typewriting, and so on. Perhaps our work in Hungary was just as good, but theirs struck me as fresher and more original. I was glad in the autumn to hear that they had accompanied five hundred Poles whom the British Government had evacuated to Cyprus, and after the fall of Crete, when Cyprus seemed dangerous, to Palestine, where Friends are still supporting their activities.

While in Bucharest I went to see the medical student who had been our interpreter when we had visited the Rumanian camps for Poles in October. He wasn't as friendly this time as he had been last. He talked about the English fighting to the last drop of French blood—I thought it ungrateful, remembering how much he had made out of us on our excursion. He had been very truculent about the Iron Guard on that occasion, but it struck me this time that he might be thinking of changing the blue garb of Carol's National Renaissance for the Green shirt of the martyred Codreanu. There were nasty stories going round about the National Renaissance. We had heard a lot of complaints in the autumn about the expense of the uniform, which not only every school child but every state official who hoped for a career was expected to buy. Now it was said that Carol owned the textile factories that produced it.

VI. RETURN TO ENGLAND

When we got back to Budapest we found the city full of German "tourists." I stood behind a long queue of them at the police station when I was registering my return. Object of visit? asked the official. Business, was the reply. What kind? What kind

is it? the tourist asked his neighbour. Say merchant, was the reply. The " merchants " looked stout and well fed, but Hungary had been induced to ration sugar and butter and have two meatless days to feed their neighbours, and there was a great drive on for hospitality to German children. The Danube swarmed with steamers bringing seekers after Strength through Joy. *Pester Lloyd* had become very truculent. It gave exuberant accounts of the British army in Flanders trapped by the surrender of Leopold and of the forthcoming invasion of England. The Germans, it said, had thousands of diving boats and plans for transporting half a million soldiers across the channel. They had a secret weapon too, which would transform the war. My Polish diplomat friend was with me when the German wireless announced the fall of Calais. " But don't you understand what that means, my dear," he said. " They're not going to bother with France. They have got their guns pointed at England now. *Pester Lloyd* is quite right. The invasion of your island is imminent."

The first since 1066, quite a historic moment. I ought to be in on that, I thought. But would I get there in time? Mussolini sounded very threatening. He had ordered all schools to be closed at the beginning of June. He was going to address the nation on June 4th. This looked like Italian declaration of war and the way to England cut. The other five members of our Unit wanted to stay in Hungary and carry on the work for the Poles as long as possible. This saved me from a dilemma. I foresaw an eventual world journey back to England, but felt in no mood for globe trotting. I handed over my work to Graham Heath, who had both administrative and diplomatic gifts, and an excellent knowledge of German, our common language, both with Hungarians and Poles. On June 2nd I left Budapest.

It was sad to leave the Poles. Their numbers had dwindled enormously, but there were still about nine thousand left. Besides those who had escaped to France, many thousands, both in Hungary and Rumania, had accepted the German invitation and returned to their country, either believing in the promises (afterwards broken) that they would be allowed back to their homes, or fearing still more the alternative of being captured by their enemies when they marched in. They were less and less sure now of an allied victory. The rumour that France would make a separate peace was already going the round and no one knew how much of her army England would be able to extricate from Flanders.

My deepest regret was in saying good-bye to Caya. At the best

Hungarians—especially the women—are admirable: lively, warm-hearted, gracious, with the charm of Austrians but more dynamic and vivacious; in the simplicity of their manners not unlike the English, but with the spontaneity of which the Puritan movement deprived us, and which we have not yet regained. Caya was all this and more. She was able to look at her country from the outside—a power rare in the Hungarian upper class who are as complacent as though they lived in an island; she understood and sympathised with the needs of the people who are still treated almost like serfs by their masters in Hungary. She was not afraid to look across the borders and see lessons to be learned in Soviet Russia, though for years its name had seldom been mentioned in her country, except with horror.

Visiting Caya at her home in Buda was like going into a museum. First one had to go through great iron-barred doors, then up a wide staircase, through vast rooms decorated with ancient tapestries and Old Masters that had lamps burning under them. It was incongruous to find Caya with her electric vivacity and modern outlook in such a feudal setting: she looked very living amongst the memorials of her ancestors who, though their names were of European fame, belonged to a past that was dead. She had fair hair piled up high, expressive blue eyes, a mouth that was rather large—a face that was not beautiful but was a real face, that one couldn't forget. And her voice and way of speaking English had a special quality.

"I wish I were coming with you," she said. "I love England, I'm never so happy as I am there. And you love it too, you know, though you imagine yourself detached and international. Look how you rush when you think that something is going to happen to it. That's a give-away. I adore your countryside. This quiet orchard plot of earth with its moon and its meadows. Who said that?" "Whoever did doesn't seem to have heard the heavy bombers go between his moon and his meadows," I said. "I like England above all because one can say and think what one likes there," she went on. "I learned there to change all my ideas about life. I would like to come and work for your evacuated children. Think of me if you start something for them. Are you planning anything?" "I don't know," I said, "I keep thinking of those long sands in Devonshire and of the meadows that go down to the rivers there, and seeing scores of city children dancing around, but it's silly because there will be fighting all along those beaches soon, I suppose."

"Well, think of me if you start something for them. I will bath them for you and do their heads and get them up in the morning. But there is an enormous lot to be done in my own country, I know, and far too few people who care. They are all so busy talking about Trianon and Transylvania and the wickedness of the Czechs and the Russians—they never think of putting their own house in order. I was the same myself once. I'm grateful to you because you don't go about saying how perfect Hungary is and how happy the peasants are, and how idyllic all dressed up in their bright hand-embroidered costumes. Do you know a relation of mine built a kind of model village and painted the shutters and doors bright blue and filled it with soi-disant peasants in their most brilliant dress and bare feet—one of them was some ex-Balkan royalty. Foreigners were taken out to see it and always exclaimed, 'why, your country is a paradise!' It made me think of Marie Antoinette and her ladies-in-waiting playing at being milkmaids."

"Yes," I said, "Hungary makes me think of France just before the Revolution. There are such contrasts, such elegance and glitter on the one side and such frightful misery on the other."

From the window we watched the lights come out along the Corso and pick out the sweep of the Danube bridges and shimmer faintly in the river. In all Europe there is no sight more brilliant. But though we couldn't see the Citadel we both thought of it. "I wish I could help people in the prisons as you did," Caya said, "but that is considered treason for a Hungarian. It is difficult to do something really worthwhile. I write articles but they are all so watered down by the censor that they become meaningless. I will go on helping the Poles. They are our guests and things are going to become more and more awful for them. Besides it's my only way of fighting the Nazis. But I wish I were coming with you. I'm sure something terrible is going to happen. The whole sky seems dark. But I shan't watch the Germans march through Hungary—I know that."

I had found Caya the first day I was in Budapest in an improvised office, trying to solve the problems of hundreds of refugee Poles, and from that moment to the last she had made work in Hungary a pleasure. There were several others too who made us feel we were honoured guests of the Hungarian people, but about Caya I had a special feeling. When she came into the rather dim offices where we used to work I felt as if someone had put on the

light. To me Caya was not only what was brave and generous in Hungary's past, but she was Hungary of the future too.

It was a queer journey back to England. What did you see in Italy? the French Intelligence officer asked in a whisper when I arrived on June 4th at Mentone, the frontier town. "Everybody moving," I said, "everybody shouting and singing, flags flying—headlines announcing a million prisoners in Flanders, France at her last gasp, England on the brink of invasion, Fascist Party imploring the Duce to claim Italy's just rights." "Hush, speak more softly. Were the troops moving up to the Yugoslav borders or to ours? Did you see any armoured trains?" "The border there was dark," I whispered, feeling very important. "I couldn't see. Here the troops were all reserves—they got out at Savona, forty kilometres away. There were no soldiers visible on this frontier." "Ah," he said dramatically, "then invasion will not be to-night." I felt inclined to laugh, but reflected suddenly that I might very shortly be feeling a similar tension myself in England.

For a few miles the French train was empty, but at Nice the rush began. Thousands of people, mountains of luggage, but still a comfortable flight. Old ladies with lap dogs—their best friends—young women with hens (they are my mascots, stroke them, soldier, they will bring you luck), all going to Paris. The Riviera is full of Fifth Columnists and spies. What do you think of them, the Macaronis? And our dear ally Leopold and his Belgians? . . . There hasn't been a war until now. But now we'll fight with our bare hands. . . . The atmosphere in the carriage was rather jolly. But in the corridor a gentle little woman talked to me. She said it wasn't their allies or their enemies that had got them down, it was the sense of betrayal by their own people, their own generals, their own government, the "deux cent familles."

At the British Consulate in Marseilles they asked me why I had left Hungary. Italy coming into the war? Rumours and panic. They had had no information.

The train to Bordeaux was exceedingly crowded. The doors of the corridor could not be shut because of the soldiers on the steps. The wind blew coldly on the children lying on its floor and the women crouching round them. The w.c.s gave standing room to half a dozen. People grudged the space taken by a large dog whose master, evacuated from Mentone overnight, kept explaining that he had bought him a ticket and had brought nothing else

with him. Out of the darkness we heard the two voices of France. " The only thing I ask of Fate now," a soldier said, " c'est que je reste français." " And all I ask," muttered his companion, " c'est que cela finisse."

At Bordeaux I climbed on to a P. & O. liner and for five days glided over a sea of glass. It was the same exquisite weather that had shone on the tanks that had entered Poland, and that was now smoothing the path of the blitzkrieg on France. But there was only a handful of people on our boat, two hundred, where in a week's time there would have been two thousand: a British Council lecturer recalled from Italy, a bearded botanist mobbed as a spy and parachutist in Corsica and advised to leave, and some saucy carefree English girls who had been studying at French universities throughout the phoney war and whom fussy fathers had now ordered home. The days were long and golden. We wished that we had not come away. We arrived in Glasgow on June 10th. On the same day Mussolini declared war on England and France. The five whom I had left behind in Hungary were warned by the Consul to leave at the beginning of August. They returned to England via Bucharest, Bagdad, Baluchistan, Bombay and the Cape, and arrived in October. The British Legation and Polish diplomatic corps did not leave till April, 1941, when the Hungarians (after the suicide of Teleki) gave official permission to the Germans to march their troops through their country for the attack on Yugoslavia. Caya also left, not wishing to witness the shame of her country. Her intention was to come to England and she had got as far as the Adriatic coast, but she was killed in an Italian air-raid on Dubrovnik.

Hungary, unlike Rumania, continued to protect the Polish fugitives in her country, and refused to hand them back to their enemies.

VII. THINKING IT OVER

Thinking over relief work in the middle of a new chaos, with the old situations back again, magnified and multiplied and a thousand times more hideous, is not an encouraging task. What does it appear in retrospect but lost endeavour: an ever-repeated sweeping up the sands with vaster deserts in front? A voice says " Try to discover and uproot the causes of war, of famine and of poverty, and your energies will be better employed." The need for relief argues a diseased society. But now we are asking our doctors to prevent disease rather than patch it up.

Yet, though it is salutary to consider wider issues and to regard with criticism and disillusion rather than with complacency the efforts of the past, our post-war problems are on the doorstep and cannot be pushed aside. Thousands of young men and women of adventurous spirit and—most of them—of great goodwill are all on fire to tackle them. Are they to be told that they will only be sand-sweepers and had better stay at-home? Has foreign relief then nothing to its credit? What are its aims and what can it hope to perform?

All relief-workers long to leave behind them something permanent that will live on after the emergency is over. They can probably do this best by training the nationals, whom they are helping, to carry on when they are gone and by supporting the local social services rather than by trying to supplant them. But the real value of foreign relief, beyond its immediate use, is as a gesture of international friendship. For, as Dr. MacPhail saw in Serbia, foreigners engaged on relief may be more effective ambassadors than those appointed by the State. They are not hedged round with pomp and officialdom, careful whom they know and what they see and say, but they live and work and suffer and hope with ordinary people. And it is because they are ambassadors that they may be immeasurably important.

Looking through my diaries I find an entry made at the close of my Serbian work. After analysing the various mistakes we made I added, "Yet after all it was a memorable development of our day, this activity of foreign relief missions. There was nothing like it before except in the great ages of Faith when monks and friars poured over Europe, nursing the sick and feeding the hungry. But the modern missions were not actuated by proselytising fervour. The Greeks put up a statue to Pity and Pity was at the back of them; and a sense—how ironic at such a time—of the value of human life. How important every peasant and every starving child to the Sisters who nursed and fed them! Perhaps it is necessary to have this in war-time to redress the balance a little and to remind us that in the end delicate things outlast the coarse, that love is stronger than the waters that try to quench it and a child's laughter still heard when the roar of battle subsides."

APPENDIX

Some Lessons from Personal Experience of Relief Work

The broad outlines of the proposals for relief and reconstruction in Europe are beyond the scope of this Appendix.* Still more remote from its purpose are political and economic considerations—the kind of peace we are to have and the methods by which the Four Freedoms of the Atlantic Charter are to be obtained, although this will profoundly affect relief, determining not only how long it will be needed but whether indeed our world will, in foreseeable time, recover from the deadly wounds of this war. My object in writing this Appendix is modest and strictly limited : it is to underline certain lessons which I have learned through my work in various countries, lessons which have mostly appeared in this book, but which may have escaped notice. They may, I think, be useful, especially to voluntary societies.

Voluntary societies will have less scope this time than after the last war. This is partly because of the overwhelming scale of the needs. Even leaving China and the Far East out of the picture, the imagination has still more than it can manage with the chaos and devastation in Europe from the Atlantic to the Volga, the Arctic Ocean to the Dodecannese. Sir Frederick Leith Ross, Chairman of the Inter-Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau, writes " Conditions after this war will have had no parallel since the Thirty Years' War." But there is another reason for the restricted scope of volunteers and that is because we have at last become planning-minded. In the interim of the two wars the idea that it is better to plan beforehand than muddle through anyhow has gained ground and we have this time an official super-State body in charge of relief, the U.N.R.R.A. (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). This is an advance of incalculable importance on last time when no prior survey of needs was made and nation was allowed to compete with nation for food and necessities and moreover opens the way to the first experiment in world-wide economic co-operation. But official bodies cannot do everything :

* See :—

(1) "Relief and Reconstruction in Europe—the First Steps." (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1*s*. 6*d*.)

(2) "Medical Relief in Europe," by Melville Mackenzie, M.D. (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2*s*.)

(3) "Quaker Adventure," by Ruth Fry. (Friends Service Council, 1*s*.)

(4) "Science and World Order." (Penguin, 9*d*.)

(5) "Education and the United Nations." (Gill, London, 1*s*.)

(6) "Famine," by Michael Asquith. (Oxford University Press, 2*s*.)

(7) "Children in Bondage." (Longman, Green & Co., 3*s*. 6*d*.)

(8) "Starvation in Europe," by G. Bourne. (Allen & Unwin, 5*s*.)

(9) "When Hostilities Cease." (Gollancz, 4*s*. 6*d*., October, 1943. This is the most comprehensive book on this list.)

(10) "The Displacement of Populations in Europe," by Kullischer. (I.L.O., 4*s*.)

See also the film, " World of Plenty."

voluntary societies are already playing a part (and will be called on to do so increasingly) in the relief of liberated countries. If they can glean a hint or two from the following notes they will not have been written in vain.

Co-ordination of Relief Organisations

Voluntary relief work of an international kind, inspired by humantarian, non-proselytising impulse, is a modern phenomenon. St. Francis sent his followers to tend the lepers, no matter what their nationality; Ignatius Loyola, a Spaniard, instituted something like a Charity Organisation in Rome; Protestants as well as Catholics dispatched medical missionaries to all parts of the world, but international relief work on a large scale and of a non-religious character, began with the Four Years' War and continued in the reconstruction period that followed it. A number of distinct organisations in a wide variety of countries raised funds for the relief of distress amongst peoples foreign to themselves and sent out their workers to administer them. This produced an embarrassing set of problems which can best be illustrated by Serbia.

Relief work for the Serbs during the war was well done on the whole and was mainly in the hands of two bodies—the Serbian Relief Fund and the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit. In Serbia itself, until the Retreat in 1915, and after that on the Salonika front, relief was mainly medical. The spheres of the various hospital units were well defined and did not overlap. In Corsica relief to the Serb refugees was well co-ordinated, owing to the wise handling of the S.R.F. administrator. In Bizerta we were fortunate in being the only foreign relief mission on the field. There was no undignified scramble for the disabled and the shell-shocked. But Serbia after the war was, for a while, complete chaos.

There were dozens of different organisations struggling for a foothold. The newly constituted Government, with a population that had leapt from four-and-a-half to nearly fourteen million, and a territory that had expanded enormously, had enough on its hands without having to be polite to all sorts of foreigners who importuned it for buildings, transport, personnel, priority and privilege. Ministers of Departments could not tell who was important and did not like to be rude to earnest Anglo-Saxons, who had left their own countries, ostensibly at great sacrifice and with the most benevolent intentions, and who dangled before their eyes all sorts of benefits for widows and orphans, for the diseased and maimed and blind. As a rule, they promised the same building to half-a-dozen different people and gave it to none of them. Heads of missions were frantic over unimplemented promises and unanswered requests. There was no co-ordination amongst them nor enough attempt to find out what the Serbs wanted themselves. In June, 1919, General Fortescue established a child welfare society in an effort to co-ordinate foreign and national work on behalf of the child population, but it was only partially successful; it should have had wider powers and have existed from the start.

I do not want to belittle the part played by the voluntary societies

in Serbia after the war. They accomplished a great deal, out of the chaos came some permanent contributions to the Yugoslav social service; Dr. MacPhail's Children's Hospital, Margaret McFie's Blind School, two Nurses' Training Schools (at Belgrade and at Valyevo) supported by Anglo-American funds, the S.R.F. Orphanage in Nish, Miss Dickinson's School of Carpentry for Orphan Boys at Travnik in Bosnia, and the American Orphanages at Kamenica and at Vranya, supported by John Frothingham.

The lesson of Serbia was not forgotten. Other relief work which I have seen has in the main been well co-ordinated. In Spain the practice of having monthly conferences at which representatives of all foreign relief organisations met influential Spaniards to discuss needs, spheres of activity and mutual help, was excellent. (There was also a co-ordinating committee of the various British organisations in London.) In Budapest in 1939 and '40 our co-ordinating committee met frequently and swept away the overlapping that there had been in the first month or two of the work for Polish refugees. There were Poles, Hungarians and British on this committee, our common language was German, our chairman the Polish Consul, a man of shrewd judgment and tact.

As less is being left now to individual effort, the problem of co-ordination should not arise to the former degree, but it is well to bear it in mind for though there may be only one foreign relief agency in a district, there will be a number of local social services. At the same time one should not forget the other, possibly greater danger this time, that too much centralisation and bureaucracy may freeze the initiative that twenty-five years ago had so much scope and was at times so remarkably creative.

Relief in Kind—Clothing, Food, Medical

Allied Governments have made estimates of the needs of their countries in food, agricultural and medical requisites, clothing, fuel, etc., and U.N.R.R.A. is making pools of these things, though, except perhaps in cereals and sugar, they cannot be adequate. As far as transport allows, they will be distributed on a priority basis. The needs of Europe are so astronomical that the British public should constantly be warned that, if they are to be met, more rather than less rationing will be necessary after hostilities cease. If civilisation is to be salvaged on the Continent sacrifices will be needed from us. We have ourselves for long been on relief from America and must be prepared to share this with others more needy after the war. Lack of transport, as the Russian famine showed, is often greater than the lack of material goods and will be much more acute this time, owing to the widespread devastation, especially if Germany adopts a scorched earth policy to combat invasion. The aeroplane will be helpful for personnel, medical stores, vitamins, etc., but can do little where millions are starving. It may be noted here that the experience of the largest relief organisation operating in Europe after the last war, the A.R.A. (American Relief Administration) was that supplies were often held up because of fear of loss of railway-wagons due to boundary disputes and ill-defined frontiers.

Though on a limited scale, voluntary societies are also preparing relief in kind for Europe. Many mistakes have been made in the past in the type of stores sent out. This time scarcity of transport will make such mistakes disasters.

(a) *Clothing*

Serbs were badly in need of clothing after the last war, but the discarded wardrobes of England and America were little use to a peasant population, still for the most part wearing peasant costume. Mrs. Carrington Wilde persuaded the school children of England to make dresses in the national style. This was fun for our children and a delight to the Serbian girls who received them. Wherever there are work parties, sewing for the Balkans or Poland—and there are many in the U.S.A.—they should bear this in mind. Patterns are easily obtainable. Made-up clothing of a Western type should be reserved for the towns, if destined for the Balkans, or for institutions. As they are not standardised and as there are never enough for needs, they are not suitable for widespread distribution. More anguish of heart is caused by the injustice of clothing distributions, where every item is different from every other, than by any other form of relief.

The cloth, calico, etc., sent to Serbia was useful and easy to distribute on an equitable basis. Yet even here there was intense bitterness, because the mayors who made lists of the needy were accused of favouring their friends and political partisans. Relief workers left a trail of broken heads wherever they passed and few mayors remained in office after a clothing distribution. Relief should, as far as possible, go through the normal channels of rationed commodities, otherwise the danger of its use as political blackmail is always great.

In the Russian famine shiploads of raw wool were sent from Australia and we also received raw flax. We distributed this to all the women of the villages, requesting in return a certain amount of woven cloth for orphans. Had this been sent to Serbia, it not only could have been rationed and gradually made available for all, but would have given the women something to do after long idleness. Dyes are made out of plants in the Balkans, and the national taste for bright colours and traditional designs would not have been perverted. There are parts of the Balkans where this would still be the best form of clothing relief. For districts where spinning and weaving have gone out, standardised clothing, lengths of material and spun wool, should be given, along with needles, cottons and other haberdashery. In Spain the refugees were eager to learn to make clothes for the community and dressmaker instructors were always found amongst them. Beside the psychological value of providing employment, there was the advantage that suitable styles were used. The staff of hospitals, convalescent homes and orphanages have no time to make clothes during the first emergency period, and made-up clothing should be sent to them.

A word of warning about babies. In most countries where I have worked there has been a disproportionate amount of small children's clothes and layettes. In Serbia, because of the removal of the male

population in 1915, there were very few children under four in 1919. In Russia, few babies survived the famine. (Moreover, famine decreases fertility.) In Hungary scarcely any babies were brought over by the fleeing Poles. Yet to all these countries a vast amount of exquisite baby clothing was sent. (In Hungary the quantities were so large that, with the consent of authorities, I asked the head of the Hungarian Red Cross to make a distribution to their own destitute babies, but she was too scrupulous to do so.) Perhaps next time the infant population will be properly assessed, but if there is any doubt, it is better to send materials which can be made up as they are needed.

Experience in Vienna and Russia shows that it is better for self-respect to have to pay something for relief, either in money or in work. The difficulty is that goods are often given entry free of custom duty, on condition that they are not sold. The payment is only token payment and permission to sell should be obtained beforehand.

(b) *Food*

In November, 1919, I found the Relief Missions' stores in Belgrade weighed down with cocoa and condensed milk. Actually, Serbia recovered rapidly and food was abundant after the first harvest (recovery will be slower this time because of the much greater devastation). Most parts of the country had sufficient cows' and goats' milk. Mountainous regions such as Montenegro and Herzegovina were badly off, but an army of welfare workers would have had to demonstrate the use of these unusual foods to the illiterate peasant women, and they were not available.

Dried milk was used in the Welfare Centres and Canteens of Spain. It is more economical in price and shipping space than condensed milk and is better for babies, but its proper distribution requires more organisation.

(c) *Medical Stores*

These are often misdirected. I have sometimes found quantities of surgical dressings in fever hospitals and loads of lint in countries where lint was never used.

Large quantities of useful drugs are often wasted, because the labels carry only the proprietary name used in the country of origin and unknown to the recipients. All drugs should carry the chemical formula and dosage in the language and system of the country in which they are to be dispensed.

Camps of Displaced Populations

These camps will certainly need the services of voluntary societies. Before discussing what these services may be, let us consider the general problem. All guesses about the composition of these camps and where they will be are difficult, but that they will be multiplied a thousandfold is certain. Never in the history of the world has there been such a Voelkerwanderung or so many millions of displaced peoples. The I.L.O. puts the figure for Europe at thirty million (see *The Times*, October 25th, 1943), but this includes prisoners of war and evacuees. Mr. Lehmann, Director-General of U.N.R.R.A., said on

November 12th, 1943, that apart from prisoners of war U.N.R.R.A. would have to repatriate or resettle twenty million uprooted people. Bertha Bracey writes on this subject: "You have first the refugees from racial, political and religious persecution. Then you have vast deportations; refugees from civil wars; the recall of nationals to their own countries; transfers of population; flight before oncoming armies and the enormous movements created by German labour demands.

"What I believe is essential is that these large and complicated problems of the movement of populations should be taken to the very heart of the plans now being formulated for dealing with relief and reconstruction in Europe as and when the conflict now raging narrows down and finally ceases. It is clear that vast and chaotic movements of people, in response to that strong homing instinct on which we must reckon, would throw an intolerable burden upon feeding, clothing and transport and would add immeasurably to the problem of preventing epidemics. Handled in an orderly way, these groups of displaced persons will present not impossible demands, whether they are foreign workers, refugees, deportees, a Jewish ghetto, a concentration camp or even a German organised brothel. If panic, chaos and raging epidemics are to be prevented, there must be orderly movement and the essence of orderly movement is that some people should stand still."

Most of the camps created by this stand-still order will be of a temporary nature. There are eight million, so it is said, in the labour gangs of the Reich. The majority of these are able-bodied men and women who, like the demobilised soldiers and prisoners of war, have homes to return to. They will need feeding temporarily—munition workers, for instance, will become idle at once—but will not present a problem of long duration, except those who have lost homes and kindred, or who were, like the Spanish Republicans and many Jews, refugees already. Here we touch an essential point. There are two problems to be faced: the first and simplest, the repatriation of nationals, the second the problem of the refugee proper, *i.e.* the person who by law, or in fact, has no protecting government. We have never arrived at a solution to statelessness and will be faced with it after the war again, when there are a thousand other problems to solve.

The flight before armies, once the Continent is invaded, may cause thousands of fugitives. There were said to be ten million refugees in France at the time of the German blitzkrieg. Dr. Audrey Russell, who worked in the refugee camps in France—first for the Spanish Republicans and later for the evacuees from Alsace and Lorraine, and in 1940, for Belgians—gives some valuable hints about the preliminary stages of organising camps for people in flight. Though this will probably be in the hands of the military authorities, voluntary societies might be called in, later, to help with them, and it is well to know the ideals to be aimed at. Dr. Russell writes: "The first steps are the most important—they are the foundations on which all subsequent relief or reconstruction are based. Initial organisation can make a refugee either into a helpless recipient of food and clothing (a true 'victim' of relief) or into a self-reliant, disciplined member of a

naturally resurgent community. Refugees are not helpless sheep; it is a great mistake to enforce discipline without revealing plans. Refugees will co-operate if asked—many are women actuated by instinct to protect the family and not amenable to discipline. Administrators must gain their confidence. They should break the camp into small units, each with elected representatives on a governing committee working under the administration, and should use loud speakers to explain plans, give information, call up labour, prevent rumours. The French camps of from 60,000 to 120,000 Spaniards were quite unworkable; there was no organisation and in consequence apathy, disease and revolt. Camps should not have more than 5,000 occupants and should be divided into self-governing sections of 1,000 each, administered by an elected committee of ten, one to every hundred refugees, to deal with the internal problems of the camp. Each unit should have an elected representative on the central administrative committee. When the preliminary organisation, the registration of the refugees and the utilisation of the available labour are completed, women and children's services, schools and workshops, should be set up, and an information bureau opened."

These recommendations are excellent. Local committees should be set up, not only in camps but wherever there are needy populations so that they may become partners in the distribution of relief and not mere recipients, and if the military, inexperienced in social work, are not able to cope with the women and children's services, they should welcome voluntary workers to help them.

Fortunately, repatriation will be a fairly quick process in most cases, but good organisation of even emergency camps is essential, if panic and unnecessary suffering are to be prevented. Moreover, thousands of refugees will have lost their homes. After the last war the Poles trekked back from the Volga to the places where their villages had once stood and lived in holes in the ground till their houses were built. But a great many of them died; a repetition of this should be avoided this time. Probably the wisest plan would be to make camps for people on their native soil, as near as can be to their future homes.

There is the problem of intruded and extruded populations, illustrated by Alsace. The Alsatians were evacuated by the French Government to south-west France at the beginning of the war and only about half of them responded to Germany's repatriation order on the fall of France. In their vacant homes the Reich has settled 650,000 people of German origin from the South Tyrol, Esthonia, Poland, etc., in order to Germanise it and uproot French traditions. When the Alsatians return to their homes after the war, these people will be turned out and may have to live in camps for a long time till new homes are found for them, for their former homes are occupied by others; moreover countries will hesitate to have a German minority within their borders again.

This will, no doubt, be a question for the Germans to deal with. I give it as an illustration of the gigantic population problems that have been created in Europe by this war, most of them by deliberate Reich policy.

The longest-lived of the camps will be composed of the least mobile

parts of the population, mothers with children, the old and disabled, and the sick. The sick will have to be taken into emergency hospitals, but the question arises as to whether delicate children should be moved into Preventoria. The experience of Spain shows that refugee mothers cling to their children with despairing passion. Their confidence must be won before inducing them to give them up. Moreover, though there must be Colonies for orphans and abandoned children, convalescent homes for the undernourished are not advisable in the first emergency period, not only because of the shattering psychological effect of separation, but also because at a time when thousands are in need they make too great demands on available resources of staff, housing and equipment, for the benefit of the few. An alternative to the Preventorium is the Day Colony or Solarium. There were many of these in Republican Spain during the Civil War, some of them on the flat roofs of houses or the parks or waste places of the towns. Part of the cure is sun and fresh air and huts or even tents provide enough shelter in countries where the climate is good. The International Brigade ran one for refugee children in Murcia. In Barcelona they were carefully graded. The most undernourished children had four hours' compulsory rest, special diet and entertainment, like reading or music, but no lessons—the less debilitated had schooling and exercise, but all were under strict medical supervision.

But in deprecating Preventoria for the emergency period, it must not be forgotten that there will be many cases of psychological disturbance amongst children, who have been subjected not only to starvation but to Nazi terror. The New Education Fellowship is preparing a handbook on this subject. We know from tales that come from occupied territory that many children have been tampered with and many little girls induced to sell themselves for bread. In thousands of others, puberty will have been delayed through undernourishment and anxiety. When the first period of relief is over, special homes ought to be set up for the rehabilitation of these children.

The kind of welfare work that can be undertaken for temporary communities has been described in several chapters of this book. In Holland workers lived in the camps. This was made possible by the building programme. The Friends provided materials and taught the Belgians to make collapsible huts, first for use in the camps, and, after the war, in Belgium. As a rule, overcrowded conditions or military regulations make it impossible for workers to live in the camps, but relations with the refugees are much more intimate when this can be done. In Corsica, the workers lived with the refugees in the prisons into which they were stuffed, and later transferred them in family groups to villages. The work in Corsica was a model of its kind. The cultural life of the Serbs was reconstituted—churches, schools and weaving workshops were set up; agricultural and other peasant activities encouraged, and medical services provided. The English workers lived in the villages with them to mother the community.

In the camps of women and children in Spain and France, Infant Welfare Centres and Milk Kitchens proved essential. After this war, the setting up of crèches and nursery schools will be important, not only because of their educative value, but because the adult labour of

camps should be set free for food production. Women who can help in organising these services will be invaluable, but the staff to run them must be found amongst the refugees themselves; not only because there will not be enough foreigners available, but because the egos of the refugees must be built up. They must be given responsibility and status and, if there is time, training.

Occupations of all kinds need organising. A reserve of cobblers' outfits, carpentry tools, sewing machines and haberdashery should be made now. Apart from agriculture, these represent the most urgent needs of every camp. It is usually easy to find amongst the refugees shoemakers, joiners and dressmakers willing to teach their craft to others.

One hears it said that workshops should only produce useful goods. This is, generally speaking, sound. Camp needs in the way of simple furniture and equipment are great, and the requirements of the refugees themselves in clothing and footwear almost infinite. But two things must not be forgotten. Materials are often scarce and the workshops have therapeutic and educative intention. In Spain I encouraged the girls to embroider and, in Bizerta, disabled Serbs to spend hours over polished olivewood cigarette cases, raffia baskets and toys, for both these reasons. As for toys, they should play an important part in the workshops of the long-term type: they are very important for nursery school equipment, they use comparatively little material, and they are a pleasure to make. Care should be taken to make things of educational value and strong enough to resist the violence of toddlers.*

The cultural and recreational activities of camps are more important than any other. Refugees need to be cheered, and many such activities need little equipment: dancing, many games (but the importance of balls must not be forgotten), singing, dramatics and so forth.

The wireless, with loud speakers attached, was the most appreciated gift made to the Polish camps in Hungary. Schools and libraries should be got going at once. Sometimes it is impossible to find many books in the language spoken by the refugees. In Bizerta the Serb printing press was invaluable; in Hungary a Polish printing press proved too expensive, but girls were employed to type out and roneo language courses, news sheets, and even long novels for circulation in the camps. Musical instruments are a great help so that an orchestra may be formed and an accordion is an asset—even mouth organs. There is usually artistic talent, and paper and paints are in demand.

Where there are numbers of young people, Scout and Guide troops have great success. The scouting idea is known as it is an international movement, and the stress laid on improvisation and community spirit make it very suitable for camp life.

Adolescent boys cause great difficulties among refugees; there is usually no one to occupy them and the adventures they have already been through often make them wild and unmanageable. This will be especially noticeable after this war as many have fought (with incredible courage) in guerrilla bands or helped in underground movements. Thieving, lying and destruction have been their highest duties—disloyalty and cowardice the only crimes. Men skilled in handling

* See "Making Nursery Toys," by Nancy Catford. (Muller, 3*s.* 6*d.*)

boys will be badly needed. It is often better to make special colonies for boys between thirteen and sixteen where they continue their schooling and do land work and carpentry as well.* (Farm colonies of this sort are described in the chapters on Serbia, Spain and Hungary.)

Foreign relief workers will be useful in all these activities for refugees are an international problem and offer a suitable outlet for their benevolence, and the reproach that they are trying to run a country which prefers to run itself cannot be made in this case. But it may well be that their greatest contribution will be the friendship that they bring and the assurance to the refugee that he is not forgotten.

Reconstruction of Education

Although this is the most important side of reconstruction, and one where many volunteers will be needed, I only touch on it here because much thought is being given to it in America as well as in Great Britain, and the interesting recommendations of the London International Assembly and Council for Education in World Citizenship can be read in their report (Education and the United Nations, 1*s*.) Needless to say, the co-operation of the U.S.S.R. " the world's largest and most important educational laboratory," is essential in this.

The American Institute for Educational Reconstruction at New York University has held conferences from which useful suggestions have come. A conference held in April, 1943, formulated as basic principles that, (1) Educational reconstruction should not be imposed from outside but effort directed towards the rehabilitation and further training of cultural leaders in the countries affected. (2) No discrimination should be made between large and small countries in the planning of educational reconstruction.

Significant recommendations of the Institute include: (*a*) establishing an International Education Organisation on the lines of the International Labour Organisation; (*b*) the adoption of European universities by American universities with a view to the collection of libraries to be given to the European institutions after the war, and the planning of specific projects of student and faculty exchange; (*c*) a million-dollar scholarship fund for the further training of European intellectuals in American universities; (*d*) recreation centres to be established in neutral European countries at the end of hostilities where intellectual leaders from the occupied countries could regain their physical and nervous health.

Help to the faculties and students of universities involves the careful, individual work which is the proper sphere of voluntary societies. The idea of Holiday Homes for intellectual leaders who have been undergoing the martyrdom of concentration camp will also have a strong appeal to democrats and people of good will over here.

The British proposals run on similar lines. Amongst a large number of practical suggestions, they emphasise strongly the need for an International Education Organisation, and propose special facilities for Youth Organisations to make exchange visits and invitations to foreign students and children to come over here to recuperate when

* See Makarenko's " Road to Life." (Lindsay Drummond, 5*s*.)

war is over. Schools should very soon be making plans for inviting undernourished children, say, from nearby countries like Belgium and France. They might make a Holiday Home for these children, a special project of their school, helping in it at week-ends and in holidays as the Instituto Escuela in Barcelona did. The Swiss have already been doing this during this war.

Need for a Charter or Convention for Refugees

Where there are refugees in large numbers, their lot is often harder than the lot of slaves or of prisoners of war. Slaves are useful to their masters and are cared for as well as their horses or cattle; the Geneva Convention and fear of reprisals do much to ensure a decent minimum for prisoners of war. But refugees have no rights. They can be thrust into malarial swamps or left to die on the sands of Argelès. The need for a Geneva Convention for Refugees and an international delegation to enforce it is very great. The miserable conditions prevailing in the camps of the refugees from Spain in France point this moral. There is a High Commissioner for Refugees already, but he must have much wider powers. It may be said that this question is beyond the scope of voluntary societies, but relief workers from their intimate contacts with refugees know more about their lives than others do, and should never cease to agitate for this reform.

Qualifications of Voluntary Workers

No hard and fast rules can be laid down about these. Famine fighters will be needed, and a knowledge of dietetics and of nutritional diseases is essential for them. Those of us who worked in Vienna, as well as Russia, saw the great difference there is in famine fighting in a city with elaborate social services and in a primitive area. There is one gleam of hope in facing the future. A Lister Institute worker who was researching into nutritional diseases in Vienna in 1920 said to me the other day: "What child's play it will be this time! We were grouping in the dark then. Now we know what vitamins are needed for every type of malnutrition. A bomberload of vitamins will be enough to cure a whole population. Provided," she added, "that there is enough ordinary food to give the needed calories."

There will be tremendous need of doctors, nurses and V.A.D.s to fight epidemics in parts of Europe, such as the Balkans and Poland. Doctors and nurses will have to have interpreters—knowledge of languages cannot be insisted on in their case—but hospital orderlies should be chosen for linguistic ability. Welfare workers will be needed for these countries, as their own social systems will most likely have broken down, for it has been the Nazi policy to kill intellectuals, and they must know the language. They should have some knowledge of nursing—should be able to do something more than First Aid, *i.e.* dressings, intra-muscular injections, etc. Hospitals ought to be willing to give a three months' course to prospective relief workers. Some should be trained in the examination of blood tests, so that such diseases as malaria and V.D. can be detected at once, and drugs not wasted.

Workers, if they are going to countries with advanced health and

social services, like France, may never need this medical knowledge, but probably nationals of these countries will do their own relief work; foreigners will be needed only as liaison officers.

The agricultural needs of Europe will be so stupendous after this war that Sir John Russell suggests that workers will be needed to organise nurseries in villages, as well as in camps, to free women for work in the fields. Tractor drivers who will train peasants will be valuable. The loss in cattle is estimated at ten million, apart from Russia, so that men experienced in methods of artificial insemination will be useful, and advisory experts who will set up the sort of " hedge laboratories " they have in country places in Russia. The shortage of animal proteins is exceedingly serious from the point of view of nutrition. Moreover, the loss of manure coupled with the lack of fertilisers means that the soil has declined disastrously in productivity.

Experience in social work is the most useful for the non-medical, but any experience of organising or dealing with people in numbers may come in handy. Teachers make good relief workers if they have not become rigid. There are many linguists among them, interested in the cultural lives of other peoples. Moreover, relief work often concentrates on youth, where their experience is invaluable.

Women should not be sent out to do domestic work. To bring more foreigners than necessary into famine areas deprives the starving of bread. It is better to use local cooks, because they know how to make the most of local produce. Wherever relief work is needed there are thousands of people who want to earn their living.

It is difficult to choose the right people for relief work abroad. Upheavals attract the unbalanced as well as those with constructive powers. People who have made a mess of their lives in their own country are eager to leave it, and they may get excellent testimonials from friends who think they will make good somewhere else—and prefer to see them there. Drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals fleeing from the law, worm their way into relief work, especially if they have good paper qualifications. Those in charge of choosing staff have a great responsibility. Many adventurous people, both here and in the U.S.A., are trying to climb on to the bandwagon of relief. They are suffering from a kind of claustrophobia from being shut up in their own country for more than four years and feel an intense nostalgia for foreign lands—easily camouflaged as a desire to do good. But a spirit of adventure is not a bad thing provided there is something else. Specialist qualifications, organising powers, gift of improvisation, linguistic talent, all these things are necessities, but not enough. Those who go out to relieve the sufferings of the starving, the diseased and the uprooted, and to bring healing to sick minds, must have a gift for service and something that one can only call charity —not in its debased sense but in its original and dynamic meaning.

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